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GĪNĀN: A MUSICAL HERITAGE OF ISMĀĪLĪ MUSLIMS FROM INDIA AND PAKISTAN

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Department of Music and Religious Studies

Edmonton, Alberta
Fall 2005

0-494-09036-7

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Canada

Dedication

To my beloved father, **Nooruddin Kassim Gillani** (late), my ever-loving mother, who has been my mentor and inspiration, **Malek N. Gillani** and brother **Minhas Gillani** (late).

Verily you should worship none save Him
and show kindness unto thy parents.
Whether one or both attain old age,
say not harsh words to them but speak to them tenderly
and serve them generously and with humility.
And say: "Oh Lord! Bestow thy Grace upon them,
even as they cherished and cared for me as a child".
(Quran, Surah al-Isra Verse 22)

Abstract

For the last seven hundred years, Ismāīlī *ginān* has been an integral part of ritual ceremonies and devotion. *Ginān* is a unique musical heritage of Ismāīlī Muslims from India and Pakistan. Although the musical expression within the Islamic discourse is often seen debatable, however, the musical sonic performances within the larger framework of religious ceremonies have played a significant role both for the creative expression of developing literatures and poetry, as well as for expansion and progress of the message of Islam in its verbal form throughout the world.

This is an ethnographic study focusing on the role of musical practices in the religious and social construction of Ismāīlīs. It examines the role of *ginān* music in the daily life of Ismāīlīs from both an ethnomusicological and religious studies perspective. The thesis situates *ginān* within the larger context of Muslim musical genres. It also shows the Sufis and Fatimid Ismāīlīs contribution to the religious music. Three approaches of the music of *ginān* tunes have been evolved for the last two decades, related to the issue of standardizing *ginān* tunes within the community. This paper critically examines the effect of standardizing *ginān* tunes within the Ismāīlī community and also addresses other questions related to *ginān*. To what extent does the *ginān* music originate from the classical Indian music or folk music? Do *ginān*s have fixed melodies? What role does the *jamā'at-khāna* plays in the life of Ismāīlī Muslim in relation to *ginān*?

This paper will also examine the role of *ginān* in the western diaspora. Has the migration of Ismāīlīs resulted in any changes in their devotional practices? What kind of challenges are youth facing in the western countries regarding learning *ginān*? How are the community members adapting *ginān* tunes to popular musical styles, or popular songs? And finally, how the transmissions of *ginān* take place both in the western countries and Indian Subcontinent?

Preface

Ginane na rejan gur je vayeke na pura,
kiya karnna us ka jeea ho jire bhai
Those who do not delight from wisdom and knowledge (*Ginān*), and do not obey the commands of a spiritual leader (guru)? For them, brother, life has no purpose.

varanan chatres sur betali bhakhia,
beda kane na sunan ho jire bhai
I have explained to you in thirty-six ragas (melodies) and forty-two languages even there are those brother, like a deaf, unwilling to hear.[1]

Today the Ismāīlī community is well organized and widespread in almost twenty-five countries around the globe, among them a large number of Ismāīlīs are from the Indian subcontinent. Specifically, it is wherever Ismāīlīs from Indo-Pakistan live that delightful melodies of *ginān* are sung daily as a part of devotion and submission to the Imām.[2] Canada itself is an excellent example where diverse ethnic Ismāīlīs from all over the world come and share their devotional literatures, with each other including *ginān,*[3] and *qasīdah.*[4] The most significant element is that all Ismāīlīs truthfully appreciate the plurality and wealth of knowledge of these devotional literatures. They also learn, share, and participate in its richness with each other at *jamā'at-khāna* (congregation house). Among all other forms of devotional literature composed by Ismāīlīs *Pīrs*[5] and *Sayyīds*[6] the *ginān* musical tradition plays a vital role in daily worship and devotion. Through

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[1] Pir Tajdin, *Ginan Sharif with translation*, vol II, ginan number 31, the Shia Imami Imaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board, Pakistan, 1992, pp, 101-102.
[2] The word "Imām" is an Arabic word, which means leader and master. According to Ismāīlīs "Imām" is the spiritual leader, a direct descendent of Prophet Mohammed.
[3] The term "*ginān*" is derived from the Sanskrit word *jñāna*, which means knowledge and wisdom. *Gināns* are the devotional song of Ismāīlīs from the Indian Subcontinent.
[4] The word "*qasida*" means, ode or religious poems.
[5] The term "*Pir*" used in Indian subcontinent by Sufi and Ismāīlīs. According to Ismāīlīs, the word "*Pir*" means "spiritual guide" directly appointed by an Imām.
[6] The term "*Sayyīd*" in the Ismāīlī tradition, often use for holy person, or spiritual saint. In general, it is also used for those who belong from the family of Prophet Mohammed.

ginān, Ismāīlīs are connected with their past, the past that shows them how their ancestors were converted to Ismāīlī Islam and what role *ginān* has played throughout their history. Therefore, the affection towards *ginān* hymns binds Ismāīlīs as one united community.

I myself grew up in a home where *ginān* was performed daily. I do not remember day of my childhood where I did not hear my mother reciting *ginān*. As an Ismāīlī child, the first song I heard, learned, and performed in the local Ismāīlī *jamā'at-khāna* was none other than *ginān*. This story is true for many Indian Ismāīlīs regardless of where they live in the world. Through the magnificent rhymes of *ginān*, every Ismāīlī conveys his or her deep love and complete devotion to the beloved Imām.

Various scholars have explored *ginān* from historical, linguistic, theological and religious studies perspectives. Most of these studies approach *ginān* from a textual perspective; as a result, they cannot fully capture *ginān's* aesthetic and emotional dimensions. For Ismāīlīs, the *ginān* book is not a collection of poetry to read, it is oral musical expression, full of melodious tunes of sound, pitch, and rhythm. *Ginānic* tunes give deeper meaning to *ginān* poetry and they give expression to the words. Hence, the written poetry becomes alive. Without exploring *ginān* from an ethnomusicological and aesthetic aspect, any study of *ginān* is not entirely complete.

This thesis is a humble attempt to explore the rich and diverse musical expression of *ginān*. This thesis is comprised of five chapters. In the first chapter, I introduce an

approach derived from ethnomusicology and religious studies to investigate the musical significance of *ginān*. Subsequently, I raise questions regarding the central issue of standardizing *ginān* tunes within the community. This chapter also analyzes how the poetry of *ginān* shares its richness with other Indian religious literatures. Moreover, it also examines how the fusion of religious beliefs in *ginān* traditions became an instrumental tool for religious leaders to exchange ideas with the masses.

The second chapter discusses the role of music in the practice of Muslim devotion. This chapter examines the legal status of music in Islam, the Sufi contribution of music, also explores the contribution of Fatimid Ismāīlīs towards religious music and the connection of *ginān* with the Ikhwān al-Safā's theory of music.

The third chapter discusses the music of Ismāīlī *ginān*. Is *ginān* based on classical Indian music or folk music? Is there any need for Ismāīlīs to standardize *ginān* tunes or not? This chapter examines, critically, the approach of three teachers and how they teach *ginānic* tunes. This chapter also provides musical transcription in western notation for better access to study of *ginān* for outsiders.

The fourth chapter is an ethnographic case study of *ginān* in the diaspora of Edmonton Ismāīlīs. This chapter explores how the transmission of *ginān* takes place in the Western world, and how is it that *ginān* has been passing from generation to generation within the community. As this chapter illustrates, research shows that the *ginān's* musical element

plays a significant role among Ismāīlī youths to learn and share devotion, although most of them unfortunately, do not understand the poetry of *ginān*.

The conclusion reviews the findings of this research with a view to identifying further directions for the study of *ginān* and its significance. It is hoped that this ethnomusicological study will open up the wide corpus of *ginān's* rich and diverse musical tradition and bring it in line with other devotional Sufi musical genres from South Asia. Throughout generations, tuneful *ginān* has given moving expression to the human longing for the divine. *Ginān's* music always has been an essential tool to express love and emotion to the beloved Imam. Ismāīlī *ginān* is a unique form of Ismāīlī *zikr* and *samā*[7], which unites the entire Ismāīlī community globally, on the spiritual and emotional levels.

[7] The word "*zikr*" means 'remembering' and the word "*sama*" means 'listening audition'.

Acknowledgements

It is with intense humility that I acknowledge the many people who have given so generously of their time and shared their knowledge and wisdom to help me in writing this thesis. First and foremost, I wish to express my profound gratitude to the Institute of Ismaili Studies, (IIS) London; without their generous scholarship and contribution towards my study at the IIS, I would not have reached this milestone. The support received during my interdisciplinary Master of Arts program at the University of Alberta, Canada, made this research possible.

Primarily, I wish to acknowledge the director of the Canadian Centre for Ethnomusicology, my co-supervisor at the University of Alberta, and my guru, Professor Regula B.Qureshi, an authority on the Sufi music of India and Pakistan. Professor Regula Qureshi has been a constant source of inspiration, advice and enlightenment. She is a brilliant academic professor to whom I owe my sincere thanks for her constant guidance, patience and the painstaking care that she took in reviewing the successive drafts of this thesis and for making this work presentable. I am also indebted to my co-supervisor Professor Earle Waugh for his keen interest, advice and suggestions regarding the Ismāīlī and Sufi music. I would like to express gratitude to Professor Michael Frishkopf for his academic help and constant encouragement to explore the devotional music of Islam. I am sincerely grateful to my advisory committee, including Professor Ann McDougall and Professor William Street, for their valuable suggestions and support. I also want to extend my sincere thank particularly to the *ginān* teachers, especially Jafersadiq I. Surmawala, Dr. Haider Alidina, Zarina Kamaluddin, Professor G. A. Allana and Professor Ali Asani for their full support. I wish to acknowledge the friends who have helped me immensely in many ways, including Fahrin Premji for editing, and Safiya Nanji for musical notations. I am especially grateful to the many *ginān* performers, and religious scholars who gave so freely of their time and knowledge; they offered assistance and counsel beyond the call of duty. Moreover, I wish to especially thank the Ismāīlī community from Edmonton and Karachi for their time and assistance.

Finally, I wish to express my love and gratitude to my beloved wife, Shazia, my family, especially my brother Rahim, without their enthusiasm and encouragement, this study was also impossible. I am particularly thankful to my mother, Malek Sultan Gillani, her constant support and encouragement has been enabling me to see this work through to the end and to follow my passion of studying Sufi and *ginānic* music and religious studies. It is to my parents that I dedicate this thesis.

There are many others, too many to mention, to whom I owe a great debt for helping me to complete this project. I wish to express my infinite gratitude to all of them.

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☼ The Satpanth Ismaili missionary work in the Indian Subcontinent

Chapter 1
Introduction

Gīnān bolore nīt nūre bhareā;
evo haide tāmare harakh nā māejī.

Recite continually the *ginān*s that are filled with light,
Boundless will be the joy in your heart.[1]

"Music is neither an autonomous activity nor a consequence of economic infrastructure. It is born of communities and artists, of men and gods, of celebration and prayer".[2] Almost all religions make use of music in religious ceremonies and rituals. However, Muslim music is not well represented in studies, and little has been done on the Ismāīlī Muslim *ginān*. The Shia Ismaili Muslims from Indo-Pakistan have an over seven hundred years-long musical tradition of reciting *ginān* within the community. The *ginān* heritage is deeply rooted in the music of the Indian subcontinent. The term '*ginān*' carries a double significance: on the one hand, it means 'religious knowledge' or 'wisdom', analogous to the Sanskrit word *jñāna* meaning "knowledge" and "wisdom". On the other hand, it means 'song' or 'recitation', suggesting a link to the Arabic *ghanna* and the Urdu/Hindi *gānā*, both verbs meaning, "to sing".[3] Ismāīlīs from the Indian subcontinent

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[1] *Pir* Sadardin, *Mahan Ismāīlī Sant Pīr Sadaradin Racit ginānono Samgrah (Collections of Ginans Composed by the great Ismāīlī Pīr Sadaradin)*, p.61. English translation is by Ali Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment*, p. 25.
[2] Forward by Jacques Attali, Qureshi, Regula (Ed.), *Music and Marx: Ideas, Practice, Politics*, NewYork: 2002, p ix
[3] Gulshan Khakee, "The Dasa Avatāra of the Satpanthi Ismāīlīs and Imam Shahis of Indo-Pakistan", Harvard: Ph.D. dissertation, 1972, p 3.

(Satpanth Ismāīlī[4]) sing daily *ginān* as a significant part of their daily religious devotions at the *jamā'at-khānas* (houses of congregation).

The entire *ginān* corpus comprises from eight hundred to one thousand poems, composed in several Indian languages (especially Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Sarāiki and Sindhi), varying in length from five to four hundred verses.[5] The *ginān* literature was composed by *Pīrs,* who came to South Asia from Iran to spread the Ismāīlīs *da'wah* (religious mission). For generations, Satpanth Ismāīlīs have revered *gināns* as sacred compositions.[6] In addition, the songs have powerful imagery and symbolism drawn from the spiritual and cultural milieu of the Indian subcontinent.

Ginān hymns are rooted in north Indian light classical and folk music. Each *ginān* has a set composition in a particular *rāg* or melodic mode. It is generally assumed within the community that the melodies (*rāgas*) of *gināns* were set by their composers to create the proper mood and disposition for prayer. The Ismāīlīs often use the word "rāg" as a synonym to the word "melody", however it does not mean as classical Indian rāgs. Specific *gināns* are indicated for different times and types of prayer, for special occasions, and for various religious ceremonies. According to the traditional view *ginān* ought to be recited by heart. Therefore, senior *ginān* teachers emphasize the

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[4] The word *Satpanth* means a true path, which is the exact translation of the Qur'ānic term *Sirat-ul-Mustāqim.*

[5] Based on a list compiled by Alibhai Nanji of Hyderabad (Pakistan), Azim Nanji estimated the total number of *gināns* to be about 800. See Azim Nanji, *The Nizari Ismāīlī Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent,* p. 10. Nagib Tajdin, a private collector of *ginān* manuscripts, has discovered several unpublished *gināns* in his collection and believes the number to be much higher. Ali Asani revised the estimated number of *gināns* to "approximately one thousand poems" See Ali S. Asani, *The Harvard Collection of Ismāīlī Literature in Indic Languages: A Descriptive Catalog and Finding Aid,* Boston, G. K Hall and Co., 1992, p, 6.

[6] Tazim R. Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance,* p. 1

memorization of *ginān* because they believe that the ritual prayer should come directly from the heart. When people memorize and understand the *ginān* then it manifests the power of sacred words, a requirement analogous to that held for the efficacious recitation of the Qur'ān and Vedās.[7] Evening prayers, for example, usually commence with *ginān* emphasizing the importance of the prayer during the auspicious hours of sunset. Other *ginān*, representing mystical themes, are recommended for early morning before dawn. These *gināns* are recited before or after periods of meditation in the early morning hours. Other *gināns* describe the emotions of particular religious events.

The *ginān* is performed by vocal solo and as group at *jamā'at-khāna*. In a group performance usually one or two performers take the lead and others sing in chorus. During *ginān* recitation at the *jamā'at-khāna* musical instruments are not allowed. *Ginān* are recited daily in the morning and evening at the *jamā'at-khāna* where Ismāīlīs congregate together for the purpose of prayer and realizing Islamic mysticism through remembrance (*zikr*) and listening (*samā'*) to these sacred songs. When Ismāīlīs listen to *ginān*s at the ritual ceremonies, they are said to experience the essence of mystical poetry. *Ginān* has a special cultural and religious significance, which arouses mystical love and divine ecstasy in its listeners and performers.

During his visit to Dhaka, Bangladesh in 1960, the 49th Imam of Shia Imami Nīzāri Muslims, H.H. Prince Karim Aga Khan, issued a *farmān* (guidance and directive to his community) stating "I feel that unless we are able to continue this wonderful tradition...

[7] Ibid. 3

we will lose some of our past which is most important to us and must be kept throughout our lives."[8]

The Imam's *farmān* is very important to all his followers. An Imam always encourages his followers to learn, understand, and share this beautiful tradition; therefore, for the devotees, learning *ginān* is one of the significant aspects of their faith.

The *ginān* experience overwhelms the performers and listeners with its many facets. During my field research, I asked Ismāīlīs to identify what, for them, was the most striking part about the *ginān*. Mostly, I received answers that *ginān's* tunes or ragas make Ismāīlīs closer to their culture and faith, and also that the powerful poetry in vernacular languages inspires them. Even the youth from the diasporic community of Edmonton, Canada, who were born and raised in western countries, and who are not very well versed in the languages of *ginān*, usually recite *ginān* at the *jamā'at-khāna*. Although the youth learn *ginān* as a part of their religious and sacred text, however they also cherished its tuneful melodies.

At the assembly inside *jamā'at-khāna,* experiencing *ginān* hymns also means observing a ritual built around the core of *ginānic* music. At the congregation hall everybody recites *ginān* together with lead performers. During the recitation Ismāīlīs often close their eyes and search for their inner self. In perusing their personal quest, each listener responds to the music in his own way, according to his inner needs and mood of the moment.

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[8] *Ginan-e Sharif: Our Wonderful Tradition,* Vancouver: Ismaili Association for Canada, n.d.,

Finally, *gināns* have so far been researched as a corpus of religious literature and as a source of Ismāīlī Muslim theology[9]. To address the musical dimension requires adding an ethnomusicological perspective to that of an Islamic religious studies perspective. Employing concepts and methodologies from both disciplines has allowed me to engage in a more holistic study of the religious music. In this study, I propose to examine *ginān* by means of an ethnomusicological approach in which I have investigated the musical significance of *ginān*. Also, I want to explore how Ismāīlī devotional songs are used ritually and informally in daily life of Ismāīlī Muslims, and what *ginān* means to its users.

Relationship to Existing Research and Literature

The *ginān* genre of Satpanth Ismāīlīsm has been explored from various academic perspectives; however, the ethnomusicological dimension is lacking from academic research. In many respects, the first researcher to bring the Satpanth Ismāīlīsm to the attention of contemporary scholars was W. Ivanow. He published various articles including *The Sect of Imam Shah in Gujarat,* which provides the historical outline of Satpanth Ismāīlis and its offshoot Imam Shahi community[10]. Ivanow's next major work

[9] Some of the major works on *ginān* are based on the historical, religious and literary grounds, including Nanji's, Shackle and Zawahir Moir work, and Kassam work mostly cover thehistorical context of Ismāīlī *ginān*s entitled "The Nīzāri Ismāīlī Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent", "Ismāīlī Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the *Ginān*s", and "Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance: Hymns of the Satpanth Ismāīlī Muslim Saint, *Pīr* Shams". Two recent books published by The Institute of IsmāīlīStudies are also very significant for the Ismāīlī *ginān* scholarship, by Ali Asani and Aziz Esmail, both monumental works focuses on the history, religious and literary aspects of *ginān*s entitled "Ecstasy and Enlightenment" and "A Scent of Sandalwood" are some major work, for more details please see the bibliography.

[10] Ivanow, Wladimir, "The Sect of Imam Shah in Gujarat", New Series, 12 , 1936, pp. 1-70.

Satpanth was published in 1948.[11] This article examines the teachings of *ginān* in detail but also covers some history. Ivanow particularly emphasized the chronological historical aspect and the connection of the Ismāīlīs to the Fatimids. In 1978, Azim Nanji, a member of the community, published a book entitled *The Nizari Ismāīlī Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent*[12] and revealed many insider views on the *ginān* genre. Nanji's work emphasized the historical and thematic aspects of *ginān*.

In 1977, Ali Asani wrote his A. B. honors thesis *The Ismaili Ginān Literature: its Structure and Love Symbolism.*[13] This was followed by his PhD thesis in 1984 entitled the *Būjh Niranjan: A Critical Edition of a Mystical Poem in Medieval Hindustani with its Khojkī and Gujarati Recentions*, in which he explored various aspect of Satpanth Ismāīlī literature including symbols, themes, and the questions of authorship of *ginān.*[14] In 2002, The Institute of Ismāīlī Studies published two major works on *ginān*. Ali Asani's *Ecstasy and Enlightenment: The Ismāīlī Devotional Literature of South Asia* was one of them. He examines Ismāīlī devotional literature *ginān* in a larger historical, cultural and religious context of Sufi, *Bhakti* and *Sant* movements in the medieval India. Asani also examines various characteristics of *ginān*s such as prosody, melodies, *Gīt* (religious songs) and Khojkī script[15] tradition in the religious life of contemporary Ismāīlīs from South Asia. Asani briefly discusses the relevance of the musical aspects of *ginān* to the Ismāīlī ritual

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[11] Ivanow, Wladimir, "Satpanth", in W. Ivanow, ed., Collectanea, vol.1. Leiden, 1948, pp.1- 54.
[12] Nanji, Azim. The *Nizāri Ismāīlī Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent*. New York: Caravan Books, 1978.
[13] Asani, Ali, The Ismāīlī *Ginān Literature: Its Structure and Love Symbolism*, B.A. thesis, Harvard University, 1977.
[14] Asani, Ali S. *The Būjh Niranjan, A Critical Edition of a mystical poem in medieval Hindustani with its Khojkī and Gujarati recensions*, PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 1984.
[15] *Khojkī* (or Khojakī) is the name of the script that was used by the Ismāīlīs from the Indian Subcontinent to record their religious literature. Khojkī script originating in Sind and is commonly used to transcribe several languages including Sindhi, Gujarati, Hindustani, and Persian.

ceremony.[16] However, the performance, ecstatic, and ritual significance of *ginān* is not yet covered. Another major work by Aziz Esmail entitled *A Scent of Sandalwood: Indo-Ismāīlī Religious Lyrics* focuses on the poetic, philosophical and literary qualities of the *ginān* genre, rather than the theological or communal interpretation.[17]

In 1984, G. Allana from Sind, Pakistan wrote a book entitled, *Gināns of Ismāīlī Pīrs: Rendered into English Verse*. Allana examined the historical evolution of Satpanth Ismāīlīsm with a chronological emphasis mostly on Sind.[18] In 1985, Tazim Kassam's book *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance: Hymns of the Satpanth Ismāīlī Muslim Saint, Pir Shams* provides an important historical reconstruction of the beginnings of Satpanth Ismāīlīsm — a phase of Ismāīlī history that has spanned over seven centuries.[19] Her book was an influential attempt to raise various key questions regarding the reconstruction of Ismāīlī history, realizing how important the Satpanth tradition of Ismaili is, especially within the larger history of Islam in the Indian subcontinent. Christopher Shackle and Zawahir Moir's in 1992 published their work, *Ismāīlī Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the ginān* contained valuable sections and translations of forty *gināns*. The main sections of the book "Script and Language" and "Textual Transmission" are particularly beneficial for scholars in terms of technical and grammar

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[16] Asani, Ali S. *Ecstasy and Enlightenment, The Ismāīlī Devotional Literature of South Asia,* I.B. Tauris Publishers in association with The Institute of *Ismāīlī* Studies, London, 2002.
[17] Esmail, Aziz. *A Scent of Sandalwood: Indo-Ismāīlī Religious Lyrics*, London: Curzon Press in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2002.
[18] Allana, G. *Ginānsof Ismāīlī Pirs*, Rendered into English Verse, Karachi: United Karachi, 1984.
[19] Kassam, Tazim R. *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance, Hymns of the Satpanth Ismāīlī Muslim Saint, Pīr Shams.* Albany: State University of New York Press, !995.

analysis.[20] The contribution of Francoise Mallison in a series of articles on the Satpanth Ismāīlī *gināns,* are extremely valuable. In her research, she tried to place *ginān* within the larger context of medieval Indian mystical literature. Mallison's research on many forms of Gujarati literatures, including *ginān* and *bhakti* traditions is also significant.[21] Shafique Virani wrote a MA thesis in 1995 entitled *The Voice of Truth: Life and Works of Sayyid Nur Muhammad Shah, A 15th/16th Century Ismaili Mystic,* examines the historical background of Ismaili Movement in 15th/ 16th century. It also disproves suggestions by previous scholars that Sayyid Nur Muhammad Shah forsook his allegience to the Ismaili Imam and became the founder of his own rival sect.[22] There followed the study by Dominique-Sila Khan in 1997, published as "Conversions and Shifting Identities: Ramdev *Pīr* and the Ismāīlīs in Rajasthan". In her studies, she used a combination of ethnographic field research based on the description of shrines and rituals in her book. She seeks to investigate Hindu 'folk' traditions in Rajasthan where the presence of Ismāīlī Muslim elements is noticeable. The author reaches the conclusion that the followers of these cults had originally been converted to Ismāīlīsm during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by missionaries acting under the direction of the central Ismaili *da'wah* in the Multan region.[23] Dominque Sila-Khan's research also revealed a link

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[20] Shackle, Christopher and Zawahir Moir. Ismāīlī *Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the Gināns.* London: University of London SOAS Press, 1992.

[21] See her articles "Les Chants Garbi de Pir Shams," in Litteratures Medievales de l'Inde du Nord, Ed. F. Mallison, Paris: Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient, 1991, pp. 115-138, "Hinduism as seen by the Nīzari Ismāīlī Missionaries of Western India: The evidence of the Ginān," in Hinduism Reconsidered, Eds, G.D. Sontheimer and H. Kulke, New Delhi, Heidelberg: South Asia Institute, 1989, pp. 93-103 and "Muslim devotional literature in Gujarati: Islam and *Bhākti,*" in Devotional literature in South Asia: Current research, 1985-1988, Ed. R.S McGregor, Cambridge: University Press, 1992, pp. 89-100.

[22] Virani, Shafique, *The Voice of Truth: Life and Works of Sayyid Nur Muhammad Shah, A 15th/16th Century Ismaili Mystic,* MA thesis, McGill University, 1995.

[23] Khan, Dominique-Sila. *Conversion and Shifting Identities: Ramdev Pīr and the Ismāīlīs in Rajasthan,* New Delhi: Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 1997.

between the *ginānic* tradition and the Agam vanis[24] (lit. "poems of the time to come") from Rajasthan. They are still sung during sacred performances, or *vigils* (*jamā-jagrāns*) organized by the followers of a sect called Mahāpanth or Nīzārpanth, who accept as one of their gurus (teacher) Ramdev *Pīr*, who was a fourteenth-fifteenth century saint from Marwar, India.[25]

Finally, most of the above mentioned works cover the historical and religious aspects of Satpanth Ismāīlīsm. However, the ethnomusicological aspect has not been covered. I strongly feel that we need to open up *ginān* to the study of its musical features, because music is an important aspect of the ritual and religious practice of Ismāīlīs.

Scope and Objectives of research

The objective of my research is to conduct a preliminary study of the musical aspect of Ismāīlī devotional hymns, *gināns*. This study focuses on the role of music as a source of identity. From a broader perspective, *ginānic* musical research will highlight this genre of Muslim devotional hymns when compared to other well-known religious genres such as *Kāfi*[26] and *Qawwālī*[27]. A first performance of *gināns* accompanied by musical instruments at the University of Alberta was well received by an audience of Indian communities,

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[24] *Agām* is used here in the sense of "future" and must not be confused with the sacred Sanskrit texts referred to as *Agāms*.

[25] Khan, Dominique-Sila, *Conversion and Shifting Identities: Ramdev Pīr and the Ismāilīs in Rajasthan*, New Delhi: Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 1997.

[26] Shackle, Christopher, *Fifty Poems of Khawaja Farid*, Bazm-e-Saqafat, p. xiii, He describes *Kāfi* as: "The word '*Kāfi*' is often said to be derived from the Arabic *qāwafi*, meaning 'rhymes'. *Kāfi* is one of the very prominent classical Indian *rāg* as well. However, *Kāfi* Sufi musical genre is well known in Sindh and Punjab.

[27] Qureshi, Regula, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan, Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwālī*, The University of Chicago Press, p. xiii, She describes *qawwālī* as a genre of Hindustani light classical music set to mystical poetry in Farsi, Urdu, Hindhi, and Sarāiki performed in Sufi assemblies for the purpose of arousing mystical emotion.

western musicians and academicians.[28] That performance demonstrated that the melodies of *gināns* are symbolically very rich and share both local Sufi and folk traditions and common themes and melodies with hymns of the *bhakti*[29] and of the *sant*[30] (Indian devotional) movements.

Using ethnographic and ethnomusicological methods and models, I have carried out field research with various *ginān* performers and scholars to illuminate the musical aspects of *ginān* hymns. As in insider, I was able to observe closely the role *ginān* plays both inside the prayer hall as well as in the social and personal level of Ismāīlī s. During the course of my field research, I also participated with the local Ismāīlī community in various *ginān* performances, also informally and formally I have conducted interviews both with local performers and students, as well as various community experts and teachers both in the western countries as well as in Pakistan. Outstanding among them are, Dr. Hyder Alidina, Jafersadiq I. Surmawala, and Zarina Kamaluddin[31] from Pakistan.[32]

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[28] Festival of Lights: celebrating devotional music from India, "Convocation Hall", 23[d] October 2003, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

[29] According to John Stratton Hawley and Mark Jurgensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India*, the term *bhakti* is derived from a Sanskrit root meaning 'to share'. Today, the term has come to mean 'a passionate love for God'.

[30] As described by John Stratton Hawley and Mark Jurgensmeyer, the term '*Sant*" is derived from the Sanskrit verb 'to be', and often connotes that which is not only real but true as well.

[31] For oral sources, see Appendix II.

[32] Haider Alidina is from Pakistan; he is trained in Indian classical music and has been exploring the musical aspect of *ginān* for the last two decades. Jafersadiq I. Surmawala and Zarina Kamaluddin also from Pakistan, are experts in *ginān* studies, and have played a very key role in teaching and recording *ginān*.

Theoretical Significance and Practical Importance

Musically *ginān* is a purely oral tradition that has never been recorded and notated until the 20th century. Recording technology has enabled community members to record *ginān* and private collections of such recordings abound. Recording technology has also enabled the musical study of *ginān*. The first attempt to study the musical aspect of *ginān* has come from three teachers mentioned above. They have followed their own methodologies for standardizing their version of *ginān*s. However, none of these individuals has taken an academic approach to the musical aspect of *ginān* hymns.

Among the Pakistani Ismāīlī community, there are some groups who have attempted to impose their versions of *ginān* compositions on act usages. This standardization attempt is a strategy to create a fixed universal "canon" of *ginān*.[33] Two groups attempted the standardization of *ginān* in Pakistan, the first group leading by Zarina Kamaluddin, advocated her style of teaching *ginān* and claimed authenticity. She believed that only *ginān*s recitation from Junagardh, India as authentic, from where many melodies have been taken and introduced into the community of Karachi, by far the largest Ismāīlī community in the country. In addition Karachi was one of the important centers of Ismāīlī religious educational matters until the late 1980's. However, this claim of authenticity is problematic because it appears to assert that only *ginān* from one region is authentic. Why should one not include those *ginān* hymns from Sind, specifically the cities of Mansura or Multan? Multan was after all the first centre of the Ismāīlī

[33] The Roman Church is an example for that as early as 1000 AD when it consolidated its religious power there of standardization of Gregorian chant.

community in India and Pakistan; here *Pīrs* Shams, Hassan Kabirdin, and Sadardin established their missionary work. Their mausoleums are also in Multan. Arguments and confusion arises within the Pakistani community, especially from senior people. They question why and how the old versions of *gināns* that they have been reciting since their childhood are changing.

The second group sought to standardize *ginān* according to Hindustani ragas; Dr. Haider Alidina is prominent among them. He selected various different styles of *gināns* from all over the world and undertook research with Hindustani classical teachers (gurus). As a result, he released two cassettes of standardized versions of *gināns* adapted to classical melodies and rhythmic patterns (ragas and *talas)*. He wanted to standardize each *ginān* in line with classical ragas. However, even in Hindustani ragas, there is significant room for improvisation according to mood and environment. Therefore, when professional singers such as Abida Parveen sing Ismāīlī *ginān*, her way of recitation differs from the popular Ismāīlī style. The questions arises, do we have any concrete proof which shows that in which ragas Ismāīlī missionaries had composed *ginān*? Did they even compose religious songs in ragas, or are these only songs that have fixed melodies like folk tunes? Or is it possible that we do not need to standardize *ginān* because it is a way of expressing faith, and such expressions do not need any fixed way of recitation to convey devotion and love?

Problems of Terminology

Ginān is a genre of Ismāīlī Muslim verbal performance, a category of "musical" recitation; it is distinct from secular music because of its religious message or content and identification. This distinction is reflected in the debate among Muslim scholars about the term "music" and its use. In general, many Muslims debate the use of "music" and whether it is forbidden (*harām*) or permitted (*halāl*) in Islam.[34] Moreover, there are various confusions about the definition of the word "music" in the Muslim world. There is no precise equivalent in the Arabic language for the English word 'music'. The word *musiqa* (borrowed from ancient Greek) applies to musical theory and playing music with instruments which refers only "to certain secular musical genres of Muslim culture".[35] *Ghinā,* is the practical art of (secular) music with emphasis on singing; *sama'* means listening to music. Qur'ān recitation (*qirā'ah*) and the call to prayer (*adhān*) share many of the characteristics of singing (*ghinā).* The legal experts in Islam distinguish them by using the term *takbīr* which means literally "raising the voice".[36] Moreover, in South Asia the linguistic usage is to apply the term "recitation" or even "reading" to the sonic performance of religious texts.

In the same way Ismāīlīs do not consider *ginān* as music. This notion also applies to other devotional traditions, for example *nat* and *hamd* (hymns in the praise of Prophet Muhammad and God). People use the word *tārānnum,* which means melody but not music. The general assumption is that music is sonically distinct from *tārānnum* melody;

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[34] Al-Faruqi. *An Annotated Glossary of Arabic Music Terms*, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1981, p. 209
[35] Ibid. p. 209
[36] Farmer, *A History of Arabian Music to the XIIIth Century* London, Luzac, 1973, p.33

however, the Ismāīlī community assumes that the word 'music' applies only when *gināns* are accompanied with musical instruments. Considering this important distinction the question is how *tārānum* or melodies can be appropriately identified in relation to their modal or raga characteristics.

The ethnomusicological research of Gordon R. Thompson on *The Carans of Gujarat: Caste Identity, Music and Cultural Change* revealed some answers concerning the same issues. According to Thompson, the traditional musicians of Gujarati-speaking western India use several terms to describe melody, with each word referenced by context. The words "*dhūn*" (tune) and "*rāg*" are common in many parts of northern India and are part of the vocabulary of almost all professional musicians in Gujarat. While the word "*dhūn*" implies a fixed tune, a number of prominent instrumentalists in the Hindustani *sangīt paddhāti* have created raga-like interpretations called "*dhūns*" based upon regional tunes[37]. The term "*dhāl*" (melody) seems to be specific to Gujarati-speaking people.

The *Dhāl* tradition seems closely tied to the Hindu devotional singing of *bhajāns* hymns that are commonly sung communally, but which are also vehicles for solo performance like *gināns*. Some *dhāls* are specified for particular days such as *sāndhya* (evening) and *parabhāt* (morning). Again, the same criteria apply to the recitation of *gināns*. Theoretically and methodologically, Thompson's explanation of *dhāl* music from Gujarat shows some similarities with the Ismaili *gināns*. However, there is a strong need to

[37] Example include Vilayat Khan's and Bismillah Khan's "*Chaiti Dhūn*" (1970?) and Ravi Shankar's "Pahari Dhūn" (1966?). The latter offers an interesting example of a musical tautology. "Pahari Dhūn" in the context of a Ravi Shankar performance suggests a raga-like treatment of a fixed tune in folk style composed in a classical raga whose origin is probably a folk song.

investigate and compare *ginān* with other devotional literatures from Indo-Pakistan, in order to determine their impact.

Ismāīlīs in the Indian subcontinent

The Ismāīlī Muslim community is the second largest sect of *Shia* Islam. Ismāīlīs have a long history, which has resulted in disperse and expanded into twenty-five countries all over the world. Among them Ismāīlīs who live in the Indian subcontinent are called Satpanth Khojas. The word Khoja means lord or master, while Satpanth means "true path", the exact translation of the Qur'ānic term *sirāt al-mustaqīm*. What distinguishes Khoja Ismāīlī Muslims is their adaptation of various cultural and religious rituals from Indic traditions. For this reason, orthodox Sunnis have always criticized the Muslim identity of Khoja Ismāīlīs.

Around 883 C.E, before Fatimid power in Sind, the famous Ismāīlī *dāi* (missionary), Abu Qassim Ibn Hawshab Mansur al-Yaman, had established an Ismāīlī base in Yemen. In that same year, he sent his nephew, al-Haytham, to spread the Ismāīlī *da'wah* (mission) in Sind. The establishment in North Africa of the Fatimid caliphate in 909 CE doubtless marked the crowning success of the early Ismāīlīs.[38] In 969 CE the Fatimids conquered Egypt and founded Cairo as a centre for learning and missionary work.[39] During the Fatimid rule, the influence of Ismāīlīs greatly increased, spreading to North Africa, Palestine, Syria, Yemen, Persia, Sicily, and the Indian subcontinent. The Fatimid power

[38] Farhad Daftary, *A Short History of the Ismāīlī*, p. 63.
[39] *Ibid*, p. 64.

extended over two centuries and flourished in trade, art, and scholarship.[40] The chief jurist of the Fatimid Caliph al-Muizz, Qadi al-Numan (d.974 C.E), less than a century later, recorded in his *Risālat iftitāh al- da'wah* (ca. 957 C.E) that the religious mission in Sind was doing well.[41]

In 965 C.E. the Ismāīlī missionary Jalam b. Shayban secured Fatimid rule in the city of Multan (located in the Punjab province of eastern Pakistan), where he openly proclaimed the sovereignty of Fatimid caliph al-Muizz,[42] thus terminating the dynamic rule of the Banu Sama (former rulers of Sind and Multan). For four decades the *khutba* (Friday sermon) in Multan was recited in the name of the Fatimid caliphs.[43] In 1005 C.E Mahmud Ghaznawi invaded Multan with the purpose of legitimizing Sunni orthodoxy in the region.[44] According to the historian Mubarak Shah "so many Ismāīlīs were killed at Multan that a stream of blood flowed through the Lahore Gate".[45] Afterwards, the Ismāīlīs from Multan began to conceal their religious identity, a practice known in Shia Islam as *taqīyah*. Around the same time the Ismāīlī *da'wah* (missionary work) moved to the southern part of Sind where the local ruler Habbarid Arab and the Sumras dynasty converted to Fatimid Ismāīlīsm[46].

Starting as early as the 11th and 12th centuries a series of Ismaili *Pīrs* came to the subcontinent from Iran and established Ismāīlī *da'wah* in Gujarat, Sind and Punjab,

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[40] Tazim R. Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom and Circle of Dance*, p. 42.
[41] Abbas al-Hamdani, *The Beginnings of the Ismāīlī da'wah in Northern India*, p. 1.
[42] Farhad Daftary, *The Ismāīlī*, p. 180.
[43] S.M. Stern, 'Ismāīlī Propaganda and Fatimid Rule in Sind,' p. 301.
[44] Tazim R. Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom and Circle of Dance*, p. 47.
[45] Derryl Maclean, *Religion and Society in Arab Sind*. p. 139
[46] Farhad Daftary, *The Ismāīlīs*, p. 180.

converting Hindus to Satpanth, the Indic vernacular term utilized by the *Pīrs* to refer to Ismāīlī Islam.[47] It was these *Pīrs* who created the *ginān* literature, and simultaneously founded the Ismāīlī Satpanth community. Between the 12th and 13th centuries Hindu bhakti,[48] sant,[49] and Sufi movements were also arising in the subcontinent, in order to spread the messages of love, humility and devotion to the masses. Similarly, the Ismāīlī missionaries were using *ginānś* in the same context, emphasizing love and humility rather then (orthodox rules and rituals). For these reasons, the historical roots of the *ginānś* are close to that of Sufi, bhakti and sant poetry.

The *Pīrs*, and the origins of *ginān*

According to historians some Ismāīlī missionaries came to the Indian subcontinent from Iran as early as the eleventh century. Unfortunately, as is the case with many poet-saints (Sants and Sufis) of medieval India, we possess remarkably little accurate historical information. What we do have, rather, are hagiographic and legendary accounts, some of which are incorporated in the *ginānś* themselves. According to these accounts, the *Pīr* were entrusted by the Ismāīlī Imams, then residing in Iran, with the responsibility of propagating and sustaining the Ismāīlī form of Islam within the subcontinent. Their target population, largely consisting of the lower class of rural Gujarat, Sind and Punjab, seems to have been heavily influenced by the Vaisnavite Hindu tradition.[50]

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[47] S.M. Stern, Ismāīlī Propaganda and Fatimid Rule in Sind, p. 298-307.
[48] John Stratton Hawley and Mark Jurgensmeyer, described the term "bhakti" in their book *'Songs of the Saints of India"* that it derived from a Sanskrit root meaning 'to share', and indicates a passionate love for God, p. 4.
[49] John Stratton Hawley and Mark Jurgensmeyer, described the term "Sānt", that it derived from the Sanskrit verb 'to be', connotes that which is not only real but true as well. p. 4.
[50] R. E. Enthoven, *Tribes and Castes of Bombay.* Vol. ii, p. 227.

Ismāīlī traditions regard *Pīr* Satgur Nur as the earliest *Pīr;* he worked mostly in Sind and Gujarat. The tombstone at the shrine dedicated to him at Navsari in Gujarat gives his death date as 1094 CE.[51] This historically enigmatic figure, whose name can be translated as 'true guide of light,' has been mentioned in several local traditions as the *Pīr* who founded the Nīzāri Ismāīlī community in Gujarat.[52] Satgur Nur is associated with many other names, such as Nur Muhammad, Nur Satgur, Pir Sadat, and Nur al-Din, all apparently referring to the same person.[53] Sachedina writes that Satgur Nur was sent to Hind (the current Indo-Pakistan subcontinent) by the twenty third Ismāīlī Imam, Hasan Aala Dhikrihi'l-Salam from Alamūt (the Ismāīlī fort in Iran). Sachedina relates the traditional anecdotes of Satgur Nur landing in a town called Patan in Gujarat, where he performed miracles and converted local Hindu priests as well as the famous king Shiddharaj Jayasingha.[54] This earliest *Pīr* is supposed to have composed at least nine short *gināns* as well as a *grānth* (a long *ginān* carrying a title).[55]

The second major *Pīr* in the Ismāīlī tradition is the 12th century *Pīr* Shams Sabzwari, a preacher associated with the Ismāīlī Imam Qassim Shah (c.1310-1370 CE).[56] In the local tradition of Punjab, Pakistan, many people identified *Pīr* Shams with Shams-i Tabrizi, the mysterious mentor of the great Muslim mystic, Maulana Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273

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[51] Ali S. Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment,* p. 33.
[52] Ibid, p.33.
[53] Dominique-Sila Khan, *Conversion and Shifting Identities,* p.40.
[54] Sachedina, Abdulaziz. pp. 154-155. Interestingly this king is claimed to have been converted by Bohora Ismāīlīs and also to Sunni faith by their respective *Pīrs* (Misra, *Muslim Communities*, pp.8-12.) Historical accounts state that he died a devout Hindu in 1143. See Nanji, *The Nīzāri Ismāīlī Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent*. p.58.
[55] Ismail K. Poonawala, *Bibliography of Ismāīlī Literature*, p. 298
[56] Ali S. Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment*, p. 33.

CE).[57] According to the historian Sabt-e-Hassan, *Pīr* Shams was the one of the earliest Saraiki and Punjabi poets.[58] A community of his followers in Punjab—the Shamsis—practiced their faith in secret, and came out as Ismāīlīs only in the twentieth century. *Pīr* Shams converted many Hindu villagers at Analvād, in Gujarat, where he is said to have joined in their *gārba* dance during the festival of *navarātrī* (which literally refers to the "nine nights" of worship and devotion to the Hindu goddess *Dūrga* or *Mata bhavāni*, the fearsome Mother).[59] *Garba* is a graceful form of dance among the Gujaratis and it is performed during the festival of *navarātrī* over nine nights. The mausoleum of *Pīr* Shams is in the centre of Multan.[60] *Pīr* Shams composed almost 106 *ginans*, including 28 *garbīs* (*ginans* accompanied by traditional Gujarati dance), and 9 *granths* in Punjabi, Saraiki, Sindhi, Gujarati and Hindi languages.

Pīr Sadardin, who lived in the 14th century, is the next most well known Ismaili *Pīr*. His *da'wah* was mostly concentrated in Sind, Punjab, Kutch and Kathiawad. According to Ismaili tradition, *Pīr* Sadardin is credited with establishing the first Ismaili *jamā'at-khāna* (congregation house) at Kotdi, Sind.[61] Moreover, *Pīr* Sadardin bestowed the title '*Khoja*', derived from the Persian word *Khāwajāh* (respected gentleman). He is also credited with initiating the Ismaili prayer, *du'a*. He composed approximately 214 *ginans* and 15 *granths*. His mausoleum is in Ucch Sharif, close to Multan.

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[57] Azim Nanji, *The Nizāri Ismāīlī Tradition*, pp.61-5.
[58] Sabt-e-Hassan, *Pakistan Main Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa*, 11th edition. Karachi: Maktaba-e-Daneyal, p. 147.
[59] Tazim R. Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance*, p. 106.
[60] Sabt-e-Hassan, *Pakistan main Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa*, p. 124.
[61] Ali S. Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment*, p. 33.

In 1470 CE, *Pīr* Sadardin was succeeded by his son, *Pīr* Hassan Kabirdin, to whom are attributed at least seventy-nine short *gināns* and seven *grānths*.[62] After *Pir* Hassan Kabirdin's death, there was considerable dissension over succession to the office of *Pīr*. His nominated successor and brother, *Pīr* Tajdin, was rejected by a section of the community in favor of his son, Imam Shah. *Pīr* Tajdin's mysterious death plunged the community into crisis. According to some historians, Imam Shah's son, Nur Muhammad Shah (d.c. 1534 CE) assumed his father's responsibility and organized the Imam Shahi sect following his father's death, however Shafique Virani in his work disproved previous scholars that Nur Mohammad Shah forsook his allegience to the Ismaili Imam.[63] Imam Shah wrote fifteen *grānths*[64] and 162 short *gināns* while Nār Muhammad Shah has two important *grānths* to his name.[65] However, despite the Imam Shahi schism and the Ismāīlī Imam's subsequent condemnation of the Imam Shah, the Khojās continuing to recite these compositions even while sometimes community members regard them to be less authoritative works.

Following the Imam Shahi crisis, the age of the great *Pīrs* came to an end. However, *gināns* continued to be composed till the early twentieth century by persons known as *sayyids*. The most notable of these is a woman, Sayyida Imam Begum (d. 1866) whose ten *gināns* are extremely popular today. She is buried in the Miān Shah cemetery in Karachi.

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[62] Ismail K. Poonawala, *Bibliography of Ismāīlī Literature*. p. 303.
[63] Virani, Shafique, *The Voice of Truth: Life and Works of Sayyid Nur Muhammad Shah, A 15th/16th Century Ismaili Mystic*, MA thesis, McGill University, 1995.
[64] The word "*grānth*" means a literary production, treatise, book or composition. According to Ismaili tradition it means longer *ginān*.
[65] Ibid. pp. 304-6.

The *gināns* were transmitted largely through oral tradition. They appear to have been put into writing only much later in their history. Many questions about *gināns* authorship as well as their transmission remain unresolved. Authorship attributions of many *gināns* can be challenged on linguistic and literary grounds.[66] Ivanow believed that few *gināns* were actually written by the old *Pīrs*, holding that they were produced instead by later devotees.[67] Likewise, Azim Nanji wrote that *ginān* compositions might have been the work of later disciples.[68] Above all it is also important to note that *ginān* transmitted mostly through oral tradition, therefore analyzing *ginān* only from textual approaches might create some problems regarding understanding *ginān's* authorship. However, further research is required in order to better understand the origins of these religious poems, and to answer questions that seem at present to be unanswerable.

Islamic and Hindu elements in the poetry of Ismāīlī ginān

Research in *ginānic* literature suggests that Ismāīlīs in Indian subcontinent were originally Hindus, probably Vaisnavites, or devotees of the deities of Ram and Krishna.[16] Some historians argued that the *gināns* employ Indian or Hindu mythological and theological concepts to present religious ideas, and questioned their 'Islamic' character. But, as Farhad Daftary mentions, most of early Ismāīlī history was written by anti-Ismāīlīs, especially Sunni conquerors. It is thus very hard to locate positive aspects of

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[66] Ali S. Asani, *The Būjh Nirānjan*, 1984.
[67] W. Ivanow, 'Satpanth. (Indian Ismailism)', in W. Ivanow, ed.,*Collectanea*, vol. 1. Leiden, 1948, pp. 1-54.
[68] Azim Nanji, *The Nizārī Ismāīlī Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent*, p. 62.
[16] Ali S. Asani, 'The Khojas of Indo-Pakistan: The Quest for an Islamic Identity,' p. 32

Ismāīlī mission work in the history written by Sunni historians.[17] As a response to Sunni persecutions, Ismāīlīs observed *taqiya* (concealment), living sometimes as Sufis, and sometimes as Hindus.[18]

Wladimir Ivanow, attributes the success of the Ismāīlī preachers to the following strategies:

> Either by intuition, or sound and clever reasoning, the Nīzāri Ismaili missionaries devised... methods depending on two principals. One was their bold tactics in separating the meaning and spirit of Islam from its hard Arabic shell. The other was their concentration of efforts on a few definite castes.[19]

Likewise, Sabt-e-Hassan mentions:

> The best strategy of Ismāīlī missionaries was that they always merged and blended Islamic teaching into local culture. Due to pluralistic strategies of Ismāīlī missionaries, Hindus did not see Islam as an anti-religion or culture. The Ismāīlī missionaries used the simple Islamic concepts in the easiest local languages of the Indian subcontinent. They never required local people to learn Arabic or adopt Arab culture. The Ismāīlī missionaries also did not pressure Hindus to exchange their names for Muslim ones. It was truly the Ismāīlī mission work that converted large numbers of Hindus to Islam and because of their positive nature and pluralistic approach, the earliest tribe, Sumro, became Muslim, and after that Samah converted to Islam.[20]

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[17] Farhad Daftary, A Short History of The Ismāīlīs. p. vii.
[18] Tazim Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance*, p.71.
[19] W. Ivanow, Satpanth (Indian Ismāīlīm), in W. Ivanow, ed., *Collectanea*, vol. 1, p. 21.
[20] Sabt-e-Hassan, *Pakistan main Tehzeeb ka Irtiqa*, (the English translation is mine), p 124.

As Ali Asani has explained, *Pīrs* presented Islam, in its Nīzāri Ismāīlī form, in languages, terms and concepts that were familiar to their Indic audience. In a religiously diverse environment, *Pīrs* used an indigenous Sanskritic term *panth* (path, doctrine, or sect) to refer to the religion they were preaching. Their preferred term for Ismāīlī Islam was therefore Satpanth, the true or correct path, and a term that echoes the Qur'ānic concept of *sirat al-mustaqim*, the right and straight path.[21] The most dramatic instance of this controversial 'mixing' of traditions occurs in the 'classic' *Dāsa Avatārs*, seeks to create an ostensible correspondence between the Vaisnavite Hindu concept of *Avatār* (reincarnation) and the Ismāīlī concept of the Imām. Hindu tradition held that Lord Visnu would be reincarnated on earth ten times. Of these ten reincarnations, Lord *Rama* was believed to be the seventh, Lord *Krishna*, the eighth, and *Buddha*, the ninth, while the tenth, called *Kalki*, was still awaited. It was believed that the *Kalki's* mount would be a horse and his weapon would be a sword. Attributes of this tenth *Avatāra* of the Hindu deity *Visnu*, renamed *Nakalanki* (the unblemished One) in the *ginān* tradition, match exactly with the Imam Ali, the first *Shi'i* Imam.[22]

A prominent scholar of South Asian Islam, the late Aziz Ahmed, felt that the *gināns* possessed a 'literary personality' that is 'un-Islamic', presumably on account of their vernacular and 'syncretistic' characteristics.[23] Such judgments have, in turn, provoked debate within the Ismāīlī community concerning the validity of using what are perceived

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[21] Ali S. Asani, "The Ismāīlī *Ginans* as Devotional literature", *Devotional Literature in South Asia: Current Research*, 1985-88, pp. 101-12.
[22] Ibid. p. 62.
[23] Aziz Ahmed, *An Intellectual History of Islam in India*, p. 126.

as the externals of culture—such as language and idiom—as yardsticks for measuring Islamic identity. Yet, when the religious identity of the Khoja community was the subject of intense dispute, the courts of colonial British India drew on evidence from the *gināns* to determine that the Khojas were indeed Muslims of the Nīzāri Ismāīlī persuasion.[24]

Poetry of the *ginān* corpus

The *gināns,* range in length from short songs of four to five verses in length to composite poems that contain up to one thousand verses. Most *ginān* take the form of *dohās* (couplets) or *caupāis* (quatrains). The *dohā* is a two-line verse consisting of twenty-four *matrās* (accents), and the *caupāi* consists of four lines with sixteen *matrās* eacn. Longer *gināns* often have *dohās* and *caupāis*, as well as *slokās*, two-line verses of sixteen *matras*.[69] In general, devotional songs mostly end in a rhyme or have a refrain (*virāni, tek*) that has poetic and sonic effect. Mostly, lines of the song end with the final word or syllable rhyming as in *koī/sohī/doī/ho* etc. According to the Urdu poetry *rādif* and *qāfiyā* (poetical terms for rhyme and weight of sounds) play an important role in poetry as well as songs. If any *ghazāl* (the prominent form of Urdu poetry) or *gīt* (song) does not follow the poetical meters and standards it is not accepted as a valid poem. The same system of structure of poetry applies to the Ismāīlī devotional songs; almost all stanzas follow the same pattern of rhyme and meters, mostly followed by a refrain.

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[24] See, for example, the famous *Khoja* Case of 1866, presided over by the Bombay high Court Judge Sir Joseph Arnold, described in Asaf A.A. Fyzee, *Cases in the Muhammadan Law of India and Pakistan*, pp. 504-549.

[69] Ali Asani, "The Ginān Literature of the Ismāīlīs of Indo-Pakistan: Its origins, Characteristics, and Themes" *Folk Sources of the Bhakti Tradition*, ed. D. Eck & F. Mallison. Groningen & Paris: Egbert Forsten and Ecole Francaise d' Extreme-Orient, 1991, 1-18. p. 9

Gināns are rarely titled, mostly identified by their first line. An exception is the longer compositions called *grānths*, with title such as Anānt Akhādo (a gathering of unlimited souls), Momin Chetamani (beware truthful devotee), Das Avātar (ten forms of Vishnu) etc. Ismāīlī devotional song also contains a category is known as *jodīlo* (linked, appended). The *jodīlo ginān*s are those *ginān* which are combined together on the basis of common author, theme, melodies or narrative sequence.

The earlier manuscripts from the seventeenth century recorded were written in the specially adapted business script unique to the Ismāīlīs from the Indian subcontinent which is known as Khojkī.[70] The collections of principal manuscripts that survive number some 250 items; the Ismāīlī Association for Pakistan assembled these *ginān* s. Later on these manuscripts were transferred to the Institute of Ismāīlī Studies in London.[71] There is also a small collection of manuscripts at Harvard University; moreover, some manuscripts are in private hands in South Asia. In all, perhaps some 500 Khojkī manuscripts survive.[72] The first Khojkī lithographs were published in the late nineteenth century by Ghulam Husain in Bombay. Later on, he was replaced by Lalji Devraj, who was officially authorized by the Aga Khan as sole receiver of manuscripts and editor and publisher of *ginān*s.[73]

According to Shackle and Moir, the old manuscripts sometimes contain such other items as acrostic tables (*cāri akhāri*) and the very popular fortune telling tables (*fal-nāmo*)

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[70] Christopher Shackle and Zawahir Moir, *Ismāīlī Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the Ginān*s, p. 15.
[71] Ibid. p.15
[72] Ibid. p. 15
[73] Ibid. p.16

often attributed to a *Pīr* or Sayyīd.[74] Furthermore, in some of the manuscripts there are some indications of the *rāgas* in which particular *ginān* are performed. However, there is a strong need for systematic investigation of such indications.[75]

Poetic Content and Themes

The *ginān* poetry contains various themes such as the concept of God, love for the Imam, the importance of spiritual progress, ethical and moral values. As far as the messages and themes of *ginān* are concerned, G. Allana categorizes *gināns* into two groups: one comprises the *gināns* where the sole purpose is conversion; these seem to be directed to a Hindu audience. In the second group there are *gināns,* which were composed for newly converted people; their purpose is to teach them the fundamentals of their new faith.[76] Nanji has pointed out almost the same kind of ideas in his broad characterization of the two phases of the tradition as a whole: emergence and consolidation. The groups of *gināns* which were presented in the category of emergence, indicate that at the stage of emergence the meaning of conversion had both political and religious connotations. At the consolidation stage, however, conversion to Satpanth would have lost its early political implications, and *gināns* presented in the category of consolidation refer primarily to religious transformation.[77]

A more differentiated and comprehensive categorization is offered by Ali Asani, who states that "the *gināns* may be categorized into five major thematic types which are as

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[74] Ibid. p.16
[75] Ibid. p. 16
[76] Allana, p. 39.
[77] Azim Nanji, *The Nizārī Ismāīlī Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent*, p. 68-69.

follows: (a) "conversion", portraying Islam through the Ismāīlī interpretation (b) "didactic", imparting ethical and moral instruction for the conduct of worldly and religious life; (c) "mystical", including guides for spiritual progress and literally expressions inspired by mystical experiences; (d) "liturgical", recited at the performance of certain religious rituals or on specific religious festivals; and (e) "cosmological and eschatological", concerning theories of the origin and end of creation".[78] However, of course there are many *gināns* which contain more than one of these five themes, conveying the message of conversion, mystical as well as didactic in one *ginān*. We can also categorize *gināns* according to the occasion of their performance, especially since some *gināns* are designated for particular times or occasions.

The *ginān* repertoire is a vast collection of poetry. To understand better *ginān*, I am taking each *ginān* category separately, as used within the Ismāīlī tradition, and also based on its poetical content and musical forms, which are as follows:

Garbī Gināns

The word *garbī* is derived from the traditional Gujarati dance called "*Garba*". The *garbī gināns* were composed by Pir Shams Sabzwari from Multan. Currently, there are twenty eight *garbī* who were written and composed by Pir Shams. One part of *garbī ginān* is as follows:

[78] Asani, Ali, *The Būjh Niranjan: A Critical Edition of a Mystical Poem in Medieval Hindustani with its Khojkī and Gujarati Recensions*, A PhD Thesis presented to the Harvard University, 1984. p. 3.

Tare vaga te ginanana vajare ma

Then he played the melody of that *ginān*!

Refrain:

khela kidha te gura shamasare ma

Guru Shams performed such a spectacle

Aavi auba te sarvay rukhi raja re ma

All the pious ones came and stood there.

Khel kidha te gura shamasare ma

Guru Shams performed such a spectacle

Tiyarey vaji che jantri dharma ni re man

Then the instruments of religion (*dharma*) began to play.

Khel kidha te gura shamasare ma

Guru Shams performed such a spectacle

Chuti tal te saghri karam ni re man

The shackles of all former deeds (*karma*) were released.

Khel kidha te gura shamasare ma.[79]

Guru Shams performed such a spectacle[80]

According to the Ismāīlī tradition, all the *garbī ginān*s were written and composed by 13th century Ismāīlī *Pīr* Shams. The *garbī ginān*s always were performed accompanied with the musical instruments during *garba* dance. Ismailis recite the *garbī ginān*s the same as other *ginān*s in the *jamā'at-khāna*. *Garbīs* have fast rhythms and tempo which are very

[79] Ginan Sharif with meaning, vol. 2, The Shia Imami Ismāīlī Tariqah and Religious Education Board for Pakistan, Abasi Letho Arts Press, P.17, Karachi, 1992.

[80] Tazim Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance, Hymns of the Satpanth Ismāīlī Muslim Saint, Pīr Shams*, P. 363

suitable for dance and popular to learn among youth. Currently Ismāīlīs do not perform *gārbī ginān*s accompanied by the musical instruments at *jamā'at-khāna*.

*Ventī ginān*s

The second type of *ginān* is called the *ventī*, or *giriā-o-zārī ginans*, (sing with utmost humility). Ismāīlīs recites *ventī ginān* almost every day at the *jamā'at-khāna*. As compared with *garbī ginān*s, *ventī ginān*s are slow in rhythm but more sweet and melodies for recitation. An example of Sayyid Imam Shah's very popular *ventī* is as follows:

Eji Hu(n) re piyaasi piya tere darshanki
Thirst for a vision (darshan) of You, O my Beloved!
Aash puraavo piya more manki
Fulfill my heart's desire, O my Beloved!
Hu(n) re piyaasi aash tori
I thirst in hope for You;
Tu(n) chinta mori kyu(n) naa karo
Yet, why do You not show the slightest concern for me?
Khijmat khaas khavaas tori
I serve you with total devotion;
Rutha saajan kiyu(n) firo ji.
So why, then Beloved, do you turn away (from me) so angrily?

Eji Jal bin machhali so pia bin kyu(n) raheve
A Fish out of water, how can it survive without its beloved (water)
Piyaji-ke kaarne so jivda deve
For the sake of its beloved, it gives up its life.
Jal bina machhali hui akeli

A fish out of water is so lonely;
Dekhe kyu(n) tadfad mare
See how it writhes and convulses in vain,
Tadfad kude kuchhu na chaale
Meher maachhi na kae ji...[81]
While the fisherman shows no mercy.[82]

Most *ventī ginān* contains message of the spiritual separation from the beloved Imam, and it also convey the message of waiting for the *didār* (appearance) of the present Imam.

Granths

The word *granth* means a literary production, treatise, book or composition (in prose or verse); a code; a section; it also designates the book or sacred scriptures of the Sikhs (short moral poems by Guru Nanak and others, in Punjabi and Hindi). According to Ismāīlī usage the *grānths* are longer *gināns*, comprise more then fifty verses up to one thousand or more. There are various *granths*, such as *Bavan Budh* (Fifty two advices), *Anant Akhado* (a gathering of unlimited souls) and *Būjh Nirānjān* (Knowledge of the Attribute less Deity). Usually Ismāīlīs take a few stanzas from *granths* and perform them in *jamā'at-khānas*.

In this chapter, we have briefly discussed the historical context of Ismaili *ginān*, its relationship to existing research and literatures, and also raised some key questions from an ethnomusicological perspective. From generation to generation, *ginān* plays a vital role in the religious rituals and social life of Ismāīls from Indian Subcontinent. In tuneful

[81] This *ventī* (I Thirst for a Vision of You), is attributed to Sayyed Khan, Published by the Shia Imami Ismāīlī Triqah and Religious Education Board for Canada entitled: Ginān -E-Sharif, Our Wonderful Tradition, English Transliteration of Holy Gināns, Vol. 2. p. 62, Ginān 33, (the date is not mentioned)
[82] Asani, Ali S, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment, The Ismāīlī Devotional Literature of South Asia*, pp. 161-162.

melodies of *ginān*, words set to music become a persuasive medium for articulating an emotional religious message. The beauty of poetry and tunes of devotional songs are able to attract those who hear and recite them in a community where the devotees share their devotion through listening and sharing religious songs. Beyond devotion, *gināns* incorporating Indic religious metaphors were effectively used to convert South Asian Hindus to Shia Islam, enabling Ismāīlīs missionaries to make a major contribution to the spread of Islam in the Indian subcontinent.

Chapter 2

The role of Music in the practice of Muslim Devotion

Introduction

The use of music in the context of Islam is always debatable and it is often assumed illicit (*harām*). Many arguments and debates have been raised for the support and rejection for the practice of music since the beginning of Islam. According to Regula Qureshi, "music is a theologically controversial concept of Islam. However, musical sound plays a highly significant role in articulating the singularly verbal message of Islam, both in its universal Qur'ānic form and in the form of local traditions".[83] This distinction is reflected in the debate among Muslim scholars about the term "music" and its use.

Many Muslim devotional genres such as *Qawwālī*[84], *Kafī*[85], *Na't*,[86] *Hāmd*[87] and *Ginān* share various elements of music to express love and affection towards God, Prophet Mohammed, Ali the first Shia Imām, and also various Sufi saints. Throughout the Muslim world, various forms of music used for religious teaching and devotional purposes. However the word "music" or the Arabic word "*mūsīqā*" (music) is not used with religious implication, words such as "chanting" and "recitation" are primarily used for the expression of religious music. For example, if someone does not comprehend

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[83] Qureshi, Regula, "Sounding the World: music in the Life of Islam,*Enchanting powers*, 1997, pp 264-265.

[84] According to Regula Qureshi, *qawwālī* is a genre of Hindustani light classical music set to mystical poetry in Farsi, Urdu, Hindhi, and Sarāiki performed in Sufi assemblies for the purpose of arousing mystical emotion.

[85] Dr. C. Shackle describes *kafī* as: "The word '*kafī*' is often said to be derived from the Arabic *qawāfi*, meaning 'rhymes'. *kafī* is one of the very prominent classical Indian *rag* as well. However, *kafī* Sufi musical genre is well known in Sindh and Punjab.

[86] Song theme in the praise of Prophet Mohammed

[87] Song theme in the praise of God

Arabic or not familiar with the practices of Islam hears the *adhān* (call to prayer) or the chanting of Qur'ān for the first time, that person would hear "music". But the "call to prayer" and Qur'ānic chanting never use the word "*mūsīqā*" or "music" as it would be considered blasphemy.[88] The above discussion shows that there are various expressions and melodic sounds used in the Islamic world as a part of daily devotion. In the same way, the Ismāīlī devotional literature *ginān* is a genre of Muslim verbal performance, a category of "musical" recitation; it is distinct from secular music because of its religious message. When Ismāīlīs sing *ginān* at the *jamā'at-khāna,* they often use the words such as "*pārhāna*" (reading or recitation) and "*ginān varro*" (to get an opportunity to sing *ginān*). In general the community members suppose that the word 'music' is only used when *ginān*s are performed with accompaniment of musical instruments.

The debate about music in Islam is not yet over and no doubt never will be because of various interpretation and views on the practice of Islam. We do not have any single Qur'ānic verse which directly deals with matter of music. Some anecdotal elements discovered from the *Sunnah*, the "customs" of the Prophet, however none of which constitutes a strong argument either for or against musical practice. The third source of Islamic Law, the opinion of doctors of the law, also varies in some degrees of acceptance and reservation.[89]

In this chapter, first I will examine the role of music in Islam, and illuminate the legal status of different types of music, which are so called "illicit" according to the *Sharī'ah*

[88] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Islam and Music: The Legal and the Spiritual Dimensions", 1997, p.223.
[89] Ibid, p. 223

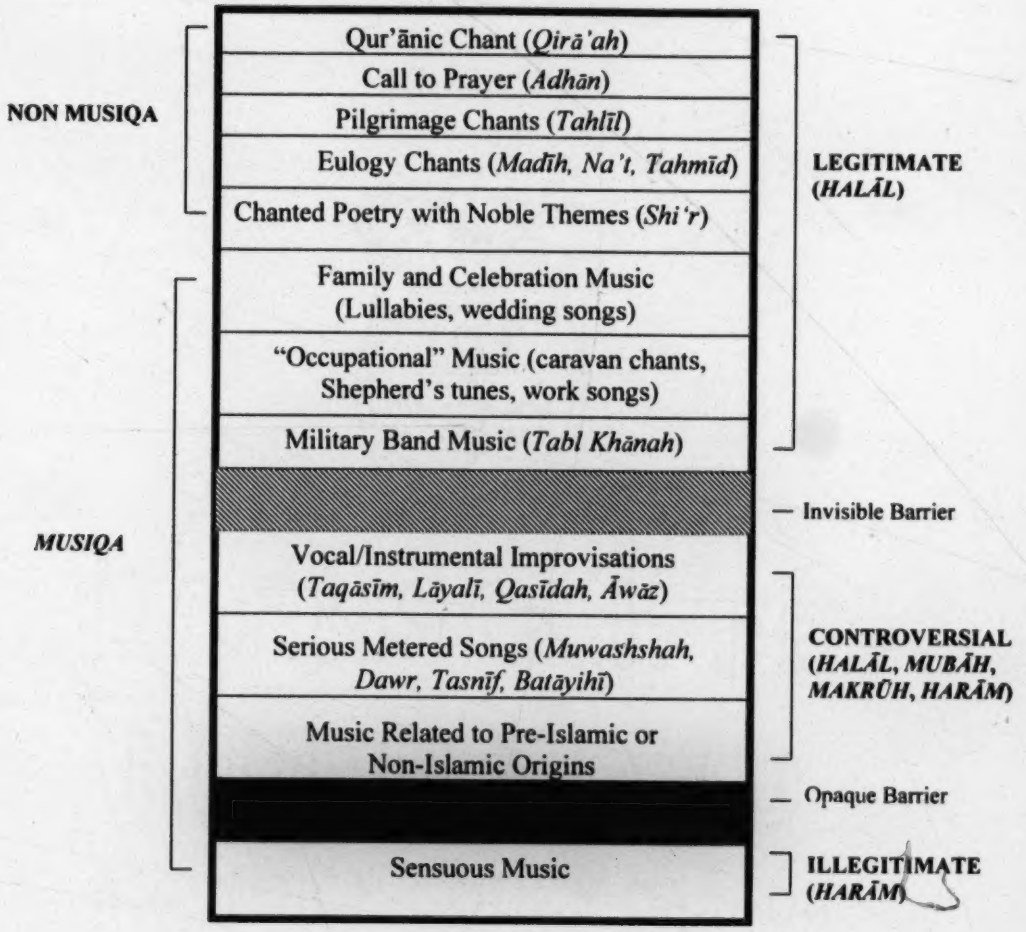
(Islamic Law). Second, I will also explore the Ismāīlī contribution to music, and also identify the connection of Ismāīlī *ginān* with the Fatimid Ismāīlī tradition from Egypt. Third, I will cover the importance of music in the religious practices of Sufism. Finally, I will draw a conclusion to demonstrate the importance of religious music in the practice of Islam.

Music in Islam: The legal Status

According to Islamic Law, there are various human actions and categories of music, which are accepted or rejected legally. (Please see the Table 1), the first category of music in a table considers *halāl*, legitimate or allowed, from the perspective of Islamic law. The second category deals with the music called "*mubāh*". This type of music is allowed, but not looked upon with great favor. The status of "*mubāh*" is music considers lower then "*halāl*". The third category is called "*makrūh*", which are disapproved by religion, but not totally forbidden by Islamic Law. The last and final category is called "*harām*", forbidden or illicit. The categories of the above music differ according to the interpretation from various *ulamā* (religious scholars). I have drawn these categories from Lois al-Faruqi, because it is the first contemporary Muslim attempt to create an overview of acceptable sonic Muslim practices. Faruqi's model helped me to categorize *ginān* in relation to other Muslim devotional genres, however using al-Faruqi for this purpose here does not imply that the model has absolute validity in term of categorizing Muslim music.

Table 1

(The Status of Music in Islamic World)[90]


NON MUSIQA
MUSIQA
Qur'ānic Chant (*Qirā'ah*)
Call to Prayer (*Adhān*)
Pilgrimage Chants (*Tahlīl*)
Eulogy Chants (*Madīh, Na't, Tahmīd*)
Chanted Poetry with Noble Themes (*Shi'r*)
Family and Celebration Music (Lullabies, wedding songs)
"Occupational" Music (caravan chants, Shepherd's tunes, work songs)
Military Band Music (*Tabl Khānah*)
LEGITIMATE (*HALĀL*)
Invisible Barrier
Vocal/Instrumental Improvisations (*Taqāsīm, Lāyalī, Qasīdah, Āwāz*)
Serious Metered Songs (*Muwashshah, Dawr, Tasnīf, Batāyihī*)
Music Related to Pre-Islamic or Non-Islamic Origins
CONTROVERSIAL (*HALĀL, MUBĀH, MAKRŪH, HARĀM*)
Opaque Barrier
Sensuous Music
ILLEGITIMATE (*HARĀM*)

[90] From Lois al-Fārūqī, *Islam and Art*, Islamabad, 1985, p.179

The chanting of the holy Qur'ān (*qirā'ah*) in the Muslim world is not considered as "music". In Qur'ān God says that "Chant the Qur'ān very distinctly!" (Qur'ān LXXIII, 4). There are sciences of chanting of the Quran which go back, according to Islamic tradition, to the prophet David and which have continued to this day.[91]

The very important element of Muslim prayers *adhān*, the call to prayer is not considered as "music" in the Muslim world. The *adhān*, since the time of Prophet Mohammed has been chanted in a clear, strong voice all over the Islamic world both in *Shia* and *Sunni* sects. is the call to prayer from a neighborhood mosque in Karachi.[92] (Please see example 1)

According to the categorization of Al-Fārūqī, the third category is called *tahlīl*, which is chanted in the pilgrimage to Mecca. The singing and chanting of *tahlīl* is extremely beautiful and it is considered one of the exquisite art forms that surrounded the often months-long pilgrimage journey to Mecca from the different part of Islamic world.[93]

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[91] Kristina Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the* Qur'ān, 1985, p.101.
[92] Qureshi, Regula, "Sounding the World: music in the Life of Islam",*Enchanting powers*, 1997, pp 268-269.
[93] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Islam and Music: The Legal and the Spiritual Dimensions"*Enchanting powers*, 1997, p.223.

Example 1: The call to prayer from a neighborhood mosque in Karachi.[94]

Example 1: Transcription, continued
(Karachi, P.E.C.H.S. Mosque, February 1969)
Text
Allāhu akbar (4x)
Ashhadū an lā ilāha illa 'llah (2x)
Ashhadū anna Muhammadan rasūl Allāh (2x)
Hayya 'ala 'l salāh (2x)
Hayya 'ala 'l falah (2x)
Allāhu akbar (2x)
Lā ilāha illa 'llah (2x)
Translation
God is most great
I testify that there is no god but God
I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of God
Come to prayer
God is most great
There is no god but God
Come to salvation
Transcription

[94] Qureshi, Regula, "Sounding the World: music in the Life of Islam", *Enchanting powers*, 1997, pp 268 269.

Next, includes various eulogies, usually called *madīh* in Arabic, which includes *na't*, *tahmīd*, and other eulogies on the life of the Prophet. I also includes Ismāīlī *gināns* in this category, not because *ginān* does include the praise of the last prophet but also include hereditary Imams (a continual spiritual guidance of Ali, son in law of Prophet Mohammed). The *gināns* include the teaching of Islam in vernacular local languages, as Khoja Ismāīlī community often describes "Our *Pīrs* and *da'is* (missionaries) had taught the essence of Qur'ān to us in our own Indian languages".[95] This category also includes the *ta'ziyah*—literally, "consolation"— the Passion play commemoration (in a spiritual sense) the tragedy of Karbalā is also "sung" or recited. Above all kinds of recitation or chanting would never be called *mūsīqī* in the Islamic world; nevertheless in the non-Islamic world they be called "music".[96]

Finally, according to the Al-Fārūqī model there are four more legitimate categories such as Chanted poetry, Family and Celebration Music, Occupational music and Military Band Music. Most of the *ulemā* (scholars of Islam) in the Muslim world agree that the above categories are legitimate according to the legal status of Islam.[97]

Music has played a vital role throughout Islamic history. The message of Islam spread from Morocco to Indonesia in various ways. One of the important ways was through music, in particular religious music. Some *ulemā* may not consider various chanted forms of Muslim devotional literature especially from India and Pakistan, such as Kafi and

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[95] I have noticed, during my field research that Ismāīlīs usually believe that *Pīrs* have taught their ancestors the essence of Qur'ān in vernacular Indian languages through *ginān*.
[96] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Islam and Music: The Legal and the Spiritual Dimensions", *Enchanting Powers*, 1997. p.223.
[97] Lois al-Faruqi, *Islam and Art*, Islamabad, p. 179.

ginan, and have often labeled them a syncretism of Islam and Hinduism. However, the music evolved and changed its forms and shades from local and cultural elements. The same case applied to the *Ismāīlīs* Muslim *ginān*s. The *ginān* are not only songs of praise they are also a source of religious teaching which was used to convert Hindus to Shia Islam in South Asia. As Seyyed Hossein Nasr says:

> The relationship of music to Islam is much more complicated. This ambivalence and ambiguity, as I have said, has played a very important role in the survival and cultivation of music in the Islamic world, from Ismaili songs in India to prayers in Morocco and everything in between. If there had been a categorical definition of what is licit and what is illicit, it would have made a great deal of difference in the creative processes of art.[98]

The Fatimid contribution to the development of Religious Music

The *ginān* devotional genre is always associated with Indian Ragas, and it is generally assumed that the Ismaili *da'is* and *Pīrs* have learned the local languages, music and culture and composed a large corpus of Ismāīlī *ginān*s. Historical analysis reveals that Fatimid Ismāīlīs, who ruled more than two centuries in Egypt, also contributed immensely to the development of art, philosophy, poetry and music. In fact, the importance of music and the roots of *ginān's* musical tradition can be traced back from the tenth century, during the time of Ikhwān al-Safā (brethren of purity). The Ikhwān al-Safā is a comprehensive work, which contains fifty-two epistles and summary of various files of knowledge such as science, arts, and philosophy. It also contains a (precious)

[98] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Islam and Music: The Legal and the Spiritual Dimensions",*Enchanting Powers*, 1997. p. 227.

epistle on music. According to many scholars including Heinz Halm, W. Ivanow, Farhad Daftry, Paul Casanova and Abbas Hamdani, the Ikhwān al-Safā was written by Ismāīlī scholars to create an intellectual base in Basra prior to the establishment of a Fatimid Empire in Egypt.[99] Throughout Muslim history the Ikhwān al-Safā has been considered a high intellectual and spiritual contribution of Ismāīlīs. The epistle of music covers some Greek and Arabic sources but also developed the theory of music as a source of spiritual development. The "Epistle on Music" opens as follows:

> After having completed the study of the theoretical spiritual arts which are of a scientific genre, and the study of the corporeal, practical arts which are of an artistic genre... we propose in the present epistle entitled "music" to study the art which is made up of both the corporeal and the spiritual. It is the art of harmony (*tā/īf*) which can be defined by the function of proportions.[100]

We can derive two main ideas from this statement, the first being that music is composed of corporeal and spiritual elements, the second that it is based on proportions. For the reason of its dual quality, the art of music has special power to understand the divine. The power also comes from the fact that music is a science of proportions is explained in the Ikhwān al-Safā "All these examples demonstrate the nobility of the science of proportion which is music. This science is necessary for all the arts. Nevertheless, if is connected with the name of music, it is because music offers the best illustration of harmony".

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[99] Abbas Hamdani, "A critique of Paul Casanova's dating of the Rasail Ikhwān al-Safā". Daftary (Ed), *Mediaeval Ismaili History and Thought*, 1996, P. 145.
[100] Amnon Shiloah, *The Dimension of Music in Islamic and Jewish Culture*, 1993, pp. 5-73.

The Ikhwān al-Safā also explains music on its highest level. It shows the effect of music upon the soul: its effects, imprinted by the rhythms and melodies of musicians on the souls of listeners, are of different types. In one of the paragraphs on music it states:

> Know, my brethren, that the effects imprinted by the rhythms and melodies (*naghāmat*) of the musician in the souls of listeners are of different types. In the same way, the pleasure which souls draw from these rhythms and melodies and the manner in which they enjoy them are variable and diverse. All that depends on the degree which each soul occupies in the domain of gnosis (*al-ma'arif*) and on the nature of the good actions which make up the permanent object of his love. Therefore, each soul, while listening to descriptions which correspond to the object of his desires and to melodies which are in accord with the object of his delight, rejoices, is exalted and delights in the image that music makes of his beloved.[101]

The Fatimids utilized music to popularize their regime. Besides, the Fatimids availed themselves of a rather sophisticated philosophy of music, if we were to judge from the treatises of Ikhwān al-Safā from the ninth century. Music was integrated into a general understanding of the principles of the universe.[102] The introduction to the treatises reflects their philosophy:

> The fifth [treatise] is a treatise on music and an illustration of how the notes and melodies, with their harmonies and rhythmic grouping, can influence the soul of the listener, in a way similar to that of medicines and potions of the bodies of animals. I also explain how

[101] Amnon Shiloah, *The Dimension of Music in Islamic and Jewish Culture*, 1993. pp. 5-73.
[102] Earle Waugh, *The Munshidīn of Egypt*, 1989, P. 30.

> the rotary movement of celestial spheres and their friction one against another creates melodies as beautiful as those produced by lutes and flutes. The aim of all this is to create in honest, loyal and intelligent human souls, an ardent desire to be lifted up to these spheres, when they shall be separated from their bodies, which is called death.[103]

In academic circles there is still much debate about the origin of the writing of Ikhwān al-Safa; however, even if it were limited to Ismāīlī circles, it would be the Fatimids' position on the use of music to move the masses. The Fatimid period was the "golden age" of Ismāīlīsm, when the Ismāīlī ruled over a vast empire and thought and literature attained their peek. According to Lous Massignon (1883-1962) it was also during the first Fatimid century, designated as the "Ismāīlī century" of Islam.[104] Daftary mentions that, "it was a time when Ismāīlīs connected with Ikhwān al-Safā (Brethern of Purity) produced their encyclopaedic *Rasāil* (Epistles), reflecting the contemporary state of knowledge on diverse sciences and a pluralistic perception of religion and philosophy".[105]

There is thus no reason why others in Egypt at that time would not have accepted a similar ideological justification for the use of music to bring the public to Islam. Waugh notes that the treatises of the Ikhwān al-Safā address the psychological effects of music which need to be observed closely, especially when Ikhwān reports that music "has been used in temples and places of worship as a help to prayer, in inducing piety, as the

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[103] Amnon Shiloah, *The Dimension of Music in Islamic and Jewish Culture*, pp. 5-73. 1993.
[104] L. Massignon, "Mutanabbi devant le siecle Ismaelien de l' Islam",*Al-Mutanabbi: Recueil publie'a l occasion de son millenaire*, 1936, p. 1.
[105] Farhad Daftary, *A Short History of The Ismāīlīs*, 1998. P. 2.

Christian in their churches, *and the Muslims in their mosques use it*"[106]. Here, what kind of 'music in the mosque' were they referring to? Unless there was music in the mosque in a way that has now passed out of existence, (possibly referred to Sufi music).[107]

Music has a tremendous impact upon the soul and it also realizes the inner nature and union with God, therefore it plays a very pivotal role in the history of Islam, especially through the esoteric teaching of Ismāīlīs and Sufis. According to Ikhwān the most beautiful and the most perfect music is none other than the psalmody of sacred texts:

> Tradition teaches that the sweetest melody which the inhabitants of paradise have at their disposal and the most beautiful song they hear is the discourse of God—great be His praise. It is thus that the Word of God Most High states, "The greeting which [will welcome them] there will be peace!" (Quran X, 10-11). And the end of their invocation will be: "Praise to Allah, Lord of the worlds." It is said that Moses—peace be upon him—upon hearing the words of his lord, was overcome with joy, with happiness and with rapture to the point of being unable to contain himself. He was overwhelmed by emotion, transported while listening to this serene melody and from that point on regarded all rhythms, all melodies, and all songs as insignificant.[108]

Waugh also argues that as far as psychological interpretation is concerned, it shows a linkage between Ikhwān al-Safā and Sufism, because Sufis also believe on the psychological interpretations.[109] Very early in the development of Sufi music in Egypt,

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[106] Earle Waugh, *The Munshidīn of Egypt*, 1989, p. 31.
[107] Ibid, p.31.
[108] Amnon Shiloah, *The Dimension of Music in Islamic and Jewish Culture*, 1993. pp. 5-73.
[109] Earle Waugh, *The Munshidīn of Egypt*, 1989, p. 31.

Fatimids contributed music to spiritual and liturgical purposes. As a result, we can assume that Fatimids might have encouraged other Sufis to use music for worship as a mean to emotionally interact with God, as a sense of well-being and joy and religious identity.[110]

Earle Waugh in his ethnographic field research in Egypt reveals that all the *ulāma* and the religious leaders whom he approached on the subject on music particularly *mawlid*, as a festive occasion, was derived directly from the Fatimids".[111] As Al-Suyuti explains that *mawlid* (i.e., praise created for this festival) began to be recited among the believers in the third century and we know that the Fatimid introduced *mawālid* recitations, not only of Mohammad, but of Ali and a number of other heroic Muslim figures.[112]

The historical analysis shows Fatimid contributed immensely to the development of religious music, and also they might have influenced Sufis for the progress of *Samā'*. I also suspect that it was a part of basic teaching of Ismāīlī missionaries to use poetry and music for the spreading of Islam and its message.

According to the oral tradition from Afghanistan, Nasir Khusraw, a famous Ismāīlī Persian poet and traveler who studied under the patronage of Fatimid Imams, wrote many quatrains (*qasīdas*), accompanied with the rubab (a lute instrument) and spread his Ismāīlī mission in present day Persia, Afghanistan and the Northern area of Pakistan, where thousands of Ismāīlīs presently live and practice the Nasir Khusraw's tradition of

[110] Ibid. p. 31.
[111] Ibid. p. 53.
[112] Ibid. p. 102.

singing *qasīda* both at the Ismāīlī *jamā'at-khānas* and in homes. Until recently, the *qasīdas* of Nasir Khusraws were recited in the Ismaili *jamā'at-khānas*, accompanied with the rubab and duff in the Northern Area of Pakistan the same approach was adopted by Ismāīlī missionaries in Indian subcontinent. The interesting element of the Indian Ismāīlī missionaries' poetry is that almost all of their poems have been chanted and have been passed from generation to generation throughout the centuries. Therefore, in musical terms we can say that the poems of Indian missionaries are not only a collection of poetry but also a book of music.

Sufis and Music

Before discussing the contribution of music made by Sufis it is necessary to briefly discuss the basic concept of Sufism. Sufis have no country and nor do they inhabit single geographic regions; however, they exist throughout the Islamic world. According to Annemarie Schimmel, Sufis represent the "mystical dimension of Islam". Regula Qureshi describes "Sufi ideology as a response to orthodox Islam, at the same time emanating from its very tenets. Thus, while affirming the unity of God (*Tauhīd*) and the absolute distinction between Creator and Created, Sufism also assumes an inner kinship between God and man and creates a bridge between them through the dynamic force of love (*muhābbat*)".[113] The central concept of Sufism is mystical love, which has two dimensions. The first is to reach the salvation of God through the way (*tarīqah*) under the direction of a spiritual guide, to achieve 'stages' or a 'situation' (*maqāmat*) of nearness to God. The other dimension comprises ecstatic intuitive fulfillment through God's gift of

[113] Qureshi, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan*, 1986, p.79.

'states' (*ahwāl*, of *hāl*) of nearness, leading ultimately to union (*wisāl*) with God.[114] "The *maqām* is a stage of spiritual attainment which is the result of the mystic's personal effort and endeavor, whereas the *hāl* is a spiritual mood depending not upon the mystic but upon God".[115]

According to Ghazzali, "what is most essential to Sufism cannot be learned, but can only be reached by immediate experience and ecstasy and inward transformation".[116] Mystical love, to become the dynamic force of both *maqam* and *hal*, must be cultivated spiritually and emotionally.[117] This is achieved through ritual or devotional practice, in particular the reciting or "recollection of God's name (*zikr*), and the listening to spiritual music (*samā'*) *zikr*."[118] The constant recollection of God consists of the repetition-silent or voiced, of divine names or religious formulae. Its particular form and emphasis are part of the teaching tradition of the various Sufi orders, and it is often practiced collectively in special gatherings led by a spiritual leader.[119]

Samā' has been a controversial practice in the Islamic tradition even though it is sanctioned (*surā* 33:41 and 13: 28) in the Qur'ān. "Listening (*samā'*) is a divine influence which stirs the heart to see Allah; those who listen to it spiritually attain to Allah, and

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[114] Ibid, p. 79.
[115] Arberry, *An Introduction to the History of Sufi*, 1942.
[116] Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, p.211.
[117] Qureshi, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan*, p. 82.
[118] Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, is the title of the book, 1975.
[119] Qureshi, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan*, p. 82

those who listen to it sensually fall into heresy".[120] In the same way, Hujwiri wrote in his *Kashf al-Mahjub* (The Unveiling of the Veiled), the first treatise on Sufism written in Persian, "Listening to sweet sounds produces an effervescence of the substance molded in man; true, if the substance by true, false, if the substance be false".[121] Islamic main stream opinion has conceived *samā* as dangerous and unlawful, but there is no direct prohibition of music in the Qur'ān, and several recognitions are given to chanting, cultivation and cantillation of music in other religious texts as well.[122]

Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali, one of the well-known Sufi and philosopher of Islam, has made a very significant contribution to music. He writes at the beginning of the long chapter of *Ihya ulum al-din* (The Revival of the Sciences of Religion) that:

> Hearts and inmost thoughts are treasuries of secrets and mines of jewels. Infolded in them are their jewels like as fire is infolded in iron and stone, and concealed as water is concealed under dust and loam. There is no way to the extracting of their hidden things save by the flint and steel of listening to music and singing, and there is no entrance to the heart save by the ante-chamber of the ears. So musical tones, measure them pleasing, bring forth what is in it and make evident its beauties and defects. For when the heart is moved there is made evident that only which it contains like as a vessel drips only what is in it. And listening to music and singing is for the heart a true touchstone and a

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[120] Cited by H.G. Farmer, *A History of Arabian Music*, 1929, P.36.

[121] This work dates to the second half of the fifth/eleventh century, according to R. A. Nicholson, who gave an English translation of it in the E.J.Gibb Memorial Series, vol. 17. London: Luzac, 1911, reprint. 1959,

[122] Ibid. p. 82.

> speaking standard; whenever the soul of the music and singing reaches the heart, the there stirs in the heart that which in it preponderates.[123]

The above statement of al-Ghazzali's discovers a key principle of Sufi believe that when a person whose soul is ready to move in the direction of the Divine, (music is the force to help them achieve communication with the Divine). There is a very famous saying in Persian that music causes whatever is within the soul to become more intense. If the soul has an inclination to sink like a rock, it will sink faster, toward the world of passions; but if it has the inclination to fly like a bird, music will strengthen the soul's wings.[124]

The famous saying regarding music in Pakistan is '*Mousiqi rooh ki gizah hai*" translation: Music is the feast of soul. It depends on the person's inner feelings how he experienced the power of music within him.

According to a Sufi Ruzbihan Baqli, a poet, musician, and commentator of Qur'ān.

> Spiritual music is the key to the treasury of Divine Verities. The Gnostics are divided: some listen with the help of the stations (*maqamāt*); some with the help of the states (*halāt*); some with the help of spiritual unveiling (*mukashifāt*); some with the help of vision (*mushahidāt*). When they listen according to the stations, they are in reproach. When they listen according to spiritual unveiling, they are in union (*wisāl*); when they listen according to vision, they are immersed in the Divine Beauty.[125]

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[123] From the eight book of the section of al-Ghazzali's *Ihya ulum al-din*, trans. Duncan B. Macdonald, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, April 1901, p. 199.
[124] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Islam and Music: The Legal and the Spiritual Dimensions" *Enchanting Powers*, 1997. p. 233.
[125] From Baqli's *Risalat al-quds*, in S.H. Nasr, trans., *Islamic Art and Spirituality*, Albany, 1987, p. 157.

The above quotation explains that people listen to music according to their listening levels for those who wish to seek the knowledge of God, "spiritual" music helps them to experience the God in many ways. With the power of spiritual music someone can reach the highest level of union (*wisāl*) with God, where according to Plato a person hears "silent music". It is important to note that Plato identified two kinds of music: music which is audible and is for everyone, and silent music, which is for sages.[126]

According to Nasr "Silence is the origin of all spiritual music and is always present in that music— through the use of rhythm, which integrates one level of reality with another, and through melody (the feminine element in music as rhythm is the masculine), which melts the soul and creates the reminiscence for one's own origin".[127] During the time of *zīkr* (remembrance) the devotees chant the name of Allah in such a way that it flows in a melody and rhythm, and after a while it becomes a silence, a silence in which the devotee can experience the light of Allah within his heart.

Conclusion

Throughout the Muslim world, the sound of devotional music plays a significant role, however, it might not be used in a same manner as the Greek word "music" but it does

[126] The idea of silent music Plato has explicitly mentioned in his work entitled *Republic*, Book VII, 531, and in some of his other writings.

[127] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Islam and Music: The Legal and the Spiritual Dimensions" *Enchanting powers*, 1997. p. 234.

share many key components of music including melodies and rhythms. The common factors in the Muslim *adhān* call to prayer, the Sufi *qawwālī* and the Ismāīlī *ginān*s are that they all share musical sounds in order to give sonic form to the religious and textual message of Islam. The Muslims always use synonyms to the word "music", such as "reciting" or "reading" rather than singing or music.

The Ismāīlīs have contributed immensely to the development of religious music. The Ikhwān al-Safā itself exemplified the spiritual dimension of music in its epistle. Also, the Ismāīlī missionaries used music not only in the Indian subcontinent to spread the message of Islam, however they had previously used music at the time of Fatimid ruled in Egypt. Where the same element of music and poetry was used to carry out IsmāīlīMuslim devotion to other parts of the Muslim world including Afghanistan, Iran, and present day Tajikistan and western China. Not only Ismāīlīs but also Sufis used music as a source to attain spiritual journey. Music became the "feast of Soul" for Sufis where *Samā'*(listening music) and *zīkr* (remembrance) is the essential part of daily ritual. Mostly both in Sufi gatherings and Ismāīlī *ginān* the human voice contribute a pivotal role to expressing devotion. According to the philosopher and musicologist al-Farabi, 870-950 C. E. only the human voice is capable of attaining to perfect music, that is, to that which reunites the three virtues of the art of music: the ability to bring pleasure and calm, to provoke certain emotions and certain sentiments, and to speak to the imagination and inspiration ideas.[128] Music has the power to uplift a soul, and it can be used as a mode of communication

[128] Erlanger, *La musique arabe*, 1:14-16

between man and God. In many ways, all over the Muslim world, musical sound and poetry find a place in religious devotion.

Chapter 3

The Musical Context of Ismāīlī *Ginān*

Introduction

Devotional music is one of the most widespread forms of music found throughout South Asia, including Hindu *Bhajan* (from Sanskrit, "to serve, adore"), Sikh genres *Shābd* and *Kīrtān* (from Sanskrit, "sacred word" and "to praise")[129] and Muslim genres such as *qawwāli* (from Arabic, *qawl* "sayings") *Kafī* (from Arabic, *qawāfi* "rhymes") and *ginān* (from Sanskrit, *jñāna*, "Knowledge") *Ginān* music is an integral part of Ismāīlī ritual and religious practices. The beautiful melodies of *ginān* create a medium between poetry and religious experience for its listeners. *Gināns* for many centuries have been transmitted through oral tradition. Community members memorize hundreds of *ginān* tunes by heart and sing the hymns at home and in the prayer hall. Singing and listening *ginān* at the prayer hall is a unique form of *Zikr* and *Samā'*, in which men and women both equally share their devotion. The poetry of *ginān* carries many messages including mystical love, devotion, ethics, humanity and religious duties but it is the ragas of *ginān* that make these religious messages more significant and powerful. The pleasing melodies give a new life to the poetry of *ginān*. Every *ginān* has a unique melody that carries the sentiments of its poetry. Therefore, it is always said within the community that a good reciter who understands the meaning of *ginān* and sings with utmost devotion, can make anyone cry.

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[129] See Amy Catlin, "Folk Music", *South Asian Folklore*, p. 211.

In order to understand the role music plays in Ismāīlī *ginān*, it is first necessary to explore its musical language, in other words, to investigate its sound pattern, rhythm and melody construction. However, before exploring the *ginān* music, we need to situate *ginān* within its geographic context. When and where were *ginān*s written and composed. The Ismāīlī missionaries' work was mostly concentrated in the northern part of Indian subcontinent. Therefore, we need to situate *ginān* within the context of North Indian or Hindustani musical tradition.

Hindustani music is generally divided under three categories:

1) *Śāstrya Sangīt* (Classical Indian Music)
2) *Bhāv Sangīt*[130] (Light Classical Music)
3) *Lok Sangīt or Deśī Sangīt* (Folk Music)

Music that is sung or played according to the rules of classical ragas[131] and *talas* (beat cycles) is called *Śāstrya Sangīt* [132](classical Indian music). *Rāgs* must consist of at least five notes[113]. The concept of rag is based on the idea that certain characteristic patterns of notes evoke a heightened state of emotion.[133] They must contain the tonic Sa (C) and at least either the fourth Ma (F) or fifth Pa (G).[134] In *Śāstrya Sangīt*, a raga follows a set of individual pitches and rules to combine into a wide variety of sound patterns, often

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[130] The word "*Bhāv*" is a Sanskrit word, generally translated as "mood". In Urdu language the word "*Bhāv*" means full of sentiments and emotions. There are also some synonyms use for light classical music such as "*Halqī Phulqī musiqī*" and "*Sugūm Sangīt*" (light music).
[131] The word *rag* is derived from the Sanskrit root *rānj* or *rāj* means to color or tinge (with emotion).
[132] Joep Bor, The Raga Guide, p. 1.
[113] Today's *Malashiri* is often quoted as a raga using less than five notes, but this raga is rarely performed.
[133] N.A. Jairazbhoy, *The Rags of North Indian Music*, p. 28.
[134] The rare *raga Adbhut Kalayan* omits both Ma (F) and Pa (G) and is an exception to this rule.

termed as improvisation. Various different performances of the same song will be more or less similar, whereas different performances of the same raga will be different because in each performance the same tonal ingredients are arranged differently.[135]

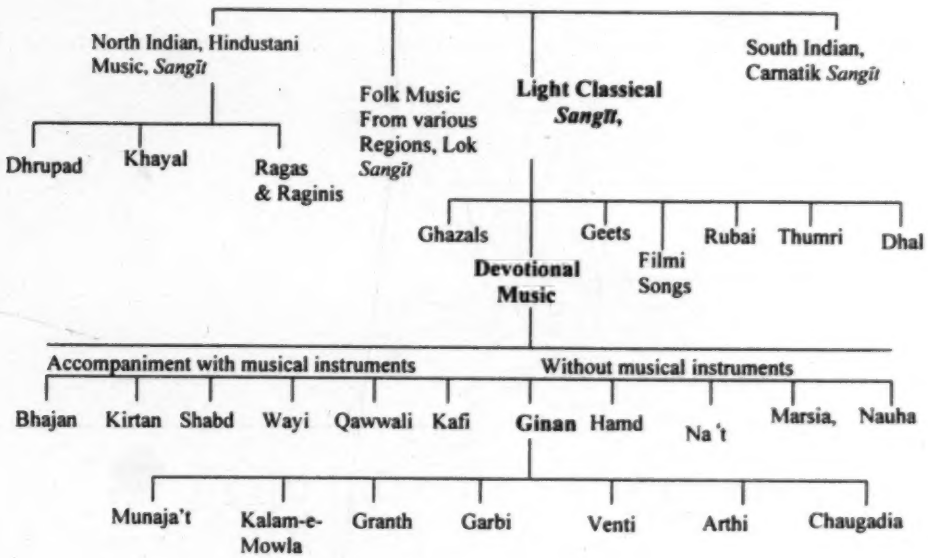
Folk music is generally referred to as *gīt* (song), with the prefix *Lok* (of the people). Sometimes further distinctions are also made, for example, *ādivāsi gīt* (the song of the aboriginal people) and *bhakti gīt* (devotional songs).[136] A folk song is a fixed sequence of notes; deviations of pitch and rhythm are minimal and usually not deliberate.[137] (See the Table 2).

Bhav Sangit or light classical music takes many elements from *Śāstrya Sangīt* and *Lok Sangīt*. However, no fixed canon applies to it. *Ghazal, thumrī* and some Hindi movie songs also devotional genres such as *Qawwālī, Bhajans* and *Kāfis* are often considered as light classical music.

Dividing Indo-Pakistani music into various categories is standard practice that has its own classificatory utility. At the same time, the divisions this practice creates are debatable. As argued by scholars like Carol Babiracki, Regula Qureshi and Amy Catlin, this distinction between folk and classical and devotional and light classical, is the result of Western musical influence and colonization. This applies particularly to the western division between classical, popular and folk music. Indeed, the boundary between classical and folk, or other categories such as tribal, devotional, semi classical and others

[135] Regula Qureshi, "Music and Culture in Sind" *Sind through the Centuries*, p. 239.
[136] Amy Catlin, "Folk Music" *South Asian Folklore*, p.208
[137] Regula Qureshi, "Music and Culture in Sind" *Sind through the Centuries*, p. 239.

Table 2: **Indo Pakistan Musical Categories**



are immensely overlap between classical and light classical, particularly devotional music in the system of Indo-Pakistan music that defining each one separately is problematic. For example, there are many classical ragas that were inspired by folk tunes such as the *rāg Ahīr* (melody named after a herder tribe), *rāg Kānda* (melody named after Karnataka state) and *rāg Jaunpurī* (melody named after the town of Jaunpur).[138] Another example is *rāg Sindhi bhairvī*, a traditional melodic pattern of Sind resembling the ancient *rāg*

[138] Amy Catlin, "Folk Music" *South Asian Folklore*, p.208

bhairavī and based on the ancient *sūr* [139] of *marūi* [140], found in Shah-jo-Risalo, which was used to sing the folk epic *Umar Marui*. This melody pattern has recently found its way into classical music, specifically Sindhi *rāg bhairvi*.[141] As a result, we can say that classical music is not based on hard and fast rules but continues to draw from the source of regional and folk music. Likewise devotional music draws from ragas; this is evidenced in the raga titles assigned to hymns from more than one religion of the North Western region.

As far as *ginâns* are concerned, first we need to ask, is *ginān* based on fixed melodies such as folk music or on raga-like improvisation? To investigate this question there is a need to look at a feature that is mostly neglected by musicologists, this feature being the text or poetry of the *ginān*. All *ginān* music is vocal, set to poetry, and its principal form is basically a poetic form. It is this poetic structure of the *ginān* which determines the basic form of the music. Scholar and author Gulam Ali Allana suspects that the root of the word "*ginān*" comes from the Arabic word *"ginā"* which means singing.[142] Moreover, he believes that *ginâns* were composed from musical meters and he also assumes that both classical and folk music must have had an influence in *ginān* music.

The Ismāīlī community members often memorize *ginān* melody and then sing along with the solo reciter at the prayer hall. The *ginān* books published by the Ismāīlī Tariqah and

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[139] The compilation of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai's poetry was composed in a specific form of music is called "*Sur*" music.
[140] The *"Umer marui"* is a very famous folk epic from Sind, Pakistan.
[141] Aziz Baloch, Spanish Canter Jondo and its Origin in Sindhi Music, p. 36.
[142] The interview with Dr. Gulam Ali Allana was taken in October 2003 athis home Hyderabad, Pakistan. Dr. Allana is a renowned philologist and historian of Sind, Pakistan, and written more then twenty books in Sindhi, Urdu and English languages. Some of his books entitled *The Arabic Element in Sindhi* and "*Sindhi Boli ji Lasani Jagrafai*" are prominent, see also Appendix II.

the Religious Education Board since the early twentieth century include only the poetry of the *ginān*; none of these *ginān* books contain any kind of Indian or Western notation that can identify the ragas or tunes of the *ginān*. The community members remember the *ginān* tunes by heart and during the *ginān* performance, they follow the written poetry. Sometimes one may use writing symbols to know where to give variations within the written poetry. A similar system applies within Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai's compilation of poetical work entitled "*Shah jo Risalo*" and in the Sikh religious scriptures entitled "*Guru Grānth Sahib*". However in both cases, each poem is assigned to a particular raga that is specifically mentioned at the start of every poem. This case does not apply with *ginān*; it is very rare to see *ginān* manuscripts containing the name of the raga at the top of the page. Gulshan Khakee in her article "The Dasa Avatāra of Pir Shams" mentions that in one of the earliest manuscripts of *ginān* dated 1793, that *ginān* "*Das Avatāra*" states the name of the raga at the top and bottom of the page as "*rag kedara*". Interestingly, Shah Abdul Latif has used the same rag in his *risalo* (a compilation of poetry work).[143] According to Regula Qureshi, *rāg kedaro* or *sūr kedaro* is derived from folk epics and later became an integral part of Indian classical music.[144]

The South Asian Studies of Islam also clearly reveal that vernacular literatures in the "folk idiom" rather than literature in classical Islamic languages, Arabic and Persian, were responsible for spreading Islamic precepts in the region.[145] Vernacular literatures were the instrumental in explaining fundamental Islamic concepts to the native

[143] Gulshan Khakee, "The Dasa Avatara of Pir Shams as Linguistic and Literary evidence of the early development of Ismailism in Sind", p. 145.
[144] Regula Qureshi, "Music and Culture in Sind", *Sind through the Centuries*, p. 240.
[145] See Annemarie Schimmel, 'Reflections on Popular Muslim Poetry,' *Contributions to Asian Studies*, 1982, p.17.

populations in terms that were familiar and accessible to them.[146] According to Asani, the subcontinent's many languages, folk songs, meters, poetic idioms, symbols and traditional music were all harnessed for this task.[147] As a result, we can assume that no only Ismāīlīs *pīrs* but also bhakti and Sufi missionaries had used the folk element of poetry as well music to convey the religious messages to the local Indian population. In general, *ginān* has fixed tunes the same as folk songs. However, the tune does vary sometimes regionally. For example a Sindhi *ginān* that is sung by Sindhi Ismāīlī will differ in tune from the same *ginān* when sung by a Gujarati Ismāīlī. When reciting *gināns*, Ismāīlīs do not perform any *alāps*[148], *tāns*[149], or any *jala*[150] which commonly used in classical Indian music.

Music of *Ginān*

From the 11th century to the 13th century[151], Ismāīlī missionaries came to India to reestablish the Ismāīlī *da'wah* and therefore introduced the *ginān* musical genre as a vehicle to spread the Ismāīlī *da'wah*; among the missionaries were *Pīr* Satgur Nur and *Pīr* Shams Sabzwari, and *Pīr* Sadardin who are quite well known. Due to the long established esoteric nature of Ismāīlī teaching and the political reason for hiding their religious identity, the first *Pīrs* had to adopt the local tradition, languages and cultures. Music plays a vital role in the daily devotion of the Hindu religion. Therefore, Ismāīlī *Pīrs* first understood their teachings and then composed various *ginān* in the same meters

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[146] _____, *As Through a Veil: Mystical Poetry in Islam*, p. 136, New York, 1982.
[147] Ali Asani, Ecstasy and Enlightenment, p. 35.
[148] *Alāps* perform without words and without rhythm. *Alāps* are the musical ideas or motifs, a different variety of configurations of notes describing the progression of raga. It is a free improvisation.
[149] *Tans* are improvised passagework in a fast rhythm, found in both vocal and instrumental music.
[150] *Jala or Jor* are pulsed improvisations, usually in the playing of instrumental music.
[151] Tazim R. Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom and Circle of Dance*, p. 47.

and expressions as *Bhajans*. According to Ismaili tradition *Pīrs* used beautiful melodies or ragas and folk tunes in various Indic vernacular languages to express Islamic devotion through music. To attract the masses and mostly from lower class Hindus, Ismāīlī *Pīrs* used simple poetry, which was full of esoteric nature and symbolically expressed love in the *ginān*. The main purpose of the Ismāīlī missionary work was to convert Hindus to Ismāīlī Islam. During the same era, many Sufi groups came to the Indian subcontinent including Suhrawardiyya and Chishtiyya Sufis. The Chistiyya Sufis were the first who started *qawwālī* music for their religious devotion as well as teaching. In general, Sufi musicians from Indo-Pakistan believe that Amir Khusrau started the *qawwālī* musical genre in the14th century; however, many *gināns* were written and composed before the *qawwālī* tradition was even started.

The interesting element is to know how the *ginān* repertoire was kept in the community throughout the centuries. How did the transmission of *ginān* take place within the community? What make the community keep learning and singing *ginān*?

As we discussed earlier *ginān* manuscripts were mainly recorded in Khojkī script. Later on, most *gināns* were transliterated in Gujarati and for a long time, the Gujarati *ginān* book became the standard work for Ismāīlīs. Although there were many *gināns* originally written and composed in various languages including Sindhi, Punjabi, and Hindi, the Gujarati *ginān* book somehow became the standard for community religious experts (missionaries). In the twentieth century, some *gināns* were transliterated in Sindhi and

Urdu especially for those Ismāīlī youths who were attending the Ismāīlī religious schools at this time and were not able to read Gujarati scripts.

Since the advent of modern technologies, *ginān* were first recorded in cassette form. There were two methods simultaneously working side by side in terms of *ginān* recordings. One was so called the "official" or formal organized method, totally controlled by Ismāīlī institutions called the Tariqah and Religious Education boards. The second method of recording *ginān* was based on informal or some individual effort to record *ginān* in a personal capacity. The Ismāīlī Tariqah boards from many countries including India, Pakistan, Tanzania, Kenya, United Kingdom, America and Canada often released *ginān* cassettes and CDs for community members. The entire authority of selecting and recording tunes of *ginān* depended upon the Ismāīlī Tariqah Board's religious missionaries. It was mainly those singers that were chosen from the community who have melodious voices. The recordings usually take place at the Ismāīlī Tariqah Boards' studio or office premises. During the recording process, the Tariqah Board carefully looks into the poetry by trying not to add or subtract any words from the standard Gujarati book published by Lalji Devraj in the 19th century. This practice is very common among the East African Ismāīlīs. However, in Pakistan, due to the Ismāīlī socio-political situation of living in an orthodox Islamic environment, many strategies was adopted by the Pakistan Tariqah board. The first strategy was to change those words from *ginān,* which employed Hindu ideas into Islamic terms. An example would be the original word "Hari" that was changed to "Ali". According to Al-waiz (religious missionary) Kamaluddin from Pakistan, this strategy of changing some words from

gināns was applied by the Ismāīlī Tariqah Board Pakistan, due to strict guidance from the Imam. Moreover, some *gināns* have been banned from recitation in Karachi *jamā'at-khānas*, especially those *gināns,* which were composed during the time of conversion, as they engage with many Hindu ideas. An example is the popular *ginān* "Das Avatar" (ten reincarnation of Hindu god Vishnu). As a result, many East African Ismāīlīs sometimes criticized Pakistan's Tariqah Board for changing and adding extra words in *ginān.*

On the other hand, East African *ginān* recordings seemed quite open, not affected by any socio-political situation, but strictly followed the poetry from Gujarati work. Here, it is also important to note that the authority of recording, releasing, even selecting of *ginān* is in the hand of Tariqah boards. Moreover, it is the Tariqah boards' responsibility to select *gināns* for teaching purposes in the Ismāīlī religious schools. However, there are some individuals who have attempted to record *gināns* and share them on a personal level with the community members. Those who personally record *ginān* bear the total cost of recording and releasing. Usually the Ismāīlī Tariqah boards do not appreciate those individuals who records *ginān*. Because of the sources of *ginān* recordings available in the community, many issues and arguments arise about the melodies of *ginān,* and what are the "correct" tunes of *ginān*. Mostly, the melodies recorded by the Tariqah board and individuals sound quite similar. However, for the last decade various problems arose due to standardizing *ginān* especially within the Pakistani Ismāīlī community. In the following section I will discuss the various approach of standardizing *ginān* in Pakistan.

Three approaches to *Ginān* melodies

During my research, I have come across three kinds of approaches to the ragas of *ginān* within the Ismāīlī community.

The first approach is to understand *ginān* according to the framework of Indian Classical music. For the last two decades, Haider Ali Dina from Pakistan has used this canon for standardizing the *ginān*. This process of standardizing *ginān* leads to the conclusion that if Ismailis are not reciting the *ginān* in a proper North Indian classical way then the recitation of *ginān* is incorrect.

The second approach is quite similar to the first one of standardizing the *ginān* as many people have distorted the original ragas of the *ginān*. Therefore, the second approach involves the need to recollect the old *ginān* tunes from senior community members and preserve the tradition. Many Ismāīlī people who follow this approach are not musically trained. There are many people who have taken this important initiative, Zarina Kamaluddin from Pakistan, prominently being among them. Zarina Kamaluddin has preserved almost an entire collection of published *gināns* entitled "*Gināns* with Traditional Tunes" with the *ginān* group of the Ismāīlī Tariqah and Religious Education Board, Pakistan.

The third approach appreciates the differences of *ginān* melodies. Many community members give more importance to the content of the poetry of *ginān* and also believe that the tunes of *ginān* differ due to regional languages and cultural background. Among

them, Jafersadiq I. Surmawala from Pakistan is one who believes that differences among of *ginān* tunes should be acceptable in community.

I have briefly introduced three different approaches of *ginān* music within the community, now I will further discuss methodologies of three main teachers and collectors of *ginān* from Pakistan in detail.

Dr. G Haider Alidina: The Standardized *gināns*

There are only a few people from the Ismāīlī community who have proper training in Indian classical music and also have wealth of *ginān* knowledge; Dr. Haider Alidina is one of them. Since the age of fifteen, he has learned classical Indian music from various renowned musicians such as Ustad Wahid Hussain Khan from Gujranwala, and his father Ustad Altaf Hussain Khan. He has also taken some Indian classical music training from Master Ashraf from University of Music Lucknow, from Ustad Hamid Hussain Khan (a very renowned sarangi player of Indian music), Ustad Vilayat Khan from Bangladesh, and the great singer Ustad Asad Ali Khan. He spent more then two decades in the service of researching and collecting *ginān* from an Indian classical music point of view. Dr. Alidina has compiled various versions of over six thousands *gināns* from all over the world. His main purpose of compiling and comparing *ginān* ragas is to find out the original root of the *ginān*. He believes that there is a strong need for standardizing *ginān* according to the North Indian classical music. As he himself trained in classical music, he also worked with classical masters for his mission of standardizing *ginān* tunes. According to Haider, some *ginān* religious teachers have deliberately mutilated and

adulterated *ginān* because of their own interest. This exercise of mutilation has affected the emotional and spiritual depth of *ginān* that was composed by the Ismāīlī *Pīrs*. Therefore he has under taken this important task to standardize *ginān* according to Indian Classical Music.

Methodology

First, Dr. Haider Alidina listens to various tunes of a particular *ginān* from region to region and then transcribes them in Indian notations. Then he compares each tune sung to the particular *ginān* poems and compares it according to the framework of classical Indian music. He believes that all *gināns* are based on Indian classical music because it carries the emotional effect of the poem. If the *ginān* ragas differ from each other than why it differs? Is it due to geographical or regional differences, or to personal improvisation? According to Dr. Allidina, if people are not learned in how to sing *ginān*, they sing however they wish, and this is not the right approach. His comparison of *ginān* is based on ragas as well as its sentiments and aesthetics. He himself does not add or subtract anything from the *ginān* when standardizing them. He listens to a wide collection of the particular *ginān* in the way that usually recited in the prayer hall. The Indian classical framework gives him guidance to findout the original root of the *ginān* tunes.

Mrs. Zarina Kamaluddin: "*Ginān* with traditional tunes"

Much credit for the historical landmark of collecting, preserving, and digitizing published *gināns* into CD format goes to Mrs. Kamaluddin. She has spent over eleven years in the mission of learning and teaching *ginān* through the Tariqah Board Karachi, Pakistan.

This is the first time in history that almost the entire collections of published gināns are available on recordings.[152] She has recorded with her ITREB (Ismāīlī Tariqah and Religious Education Board) *ginān* group almost 750 *gināns*, including 66 *Grānths* (longer *ginān*); almost all printed material of the *gināns* has been recorded by Zarina Kamaluddin, and her ITREB[153] *ginān* group. Because the *Grānths* are longer, only the samples of the *Grānths* tunes are recorded in their volumes.

Methodology

Mrs. Kamaluddin has learned many *gināns* since her childhood due to her personal interest and her family's devotional practice of *ginān*. Many of the *gināns* that she has learned from elder community members. Both her parents were very well versed and trained in *ginān*.

As Zarina explained that from 1960 -1970, many *ginān* tunes were changed for a number of reasons. First was the drive to popularize *ginān* among the Ismāīlī youth hence, many attempts were made to perform *ginān* accompanied with musical instruments. There was no specific guidance from the Ismāīlī Tariqah Board regarding *ginān*. In the process of singing *ginān* with musical instruments, many Ismāīlī singers have attempted to change *ginān's* original tunes. Many community members during that time became interested to learn *ginān* and without any negative intention they learned the new melodies that were

[152] Before Zarina Kamaluddin, Shamsuddin Haji (late) from Edmonton, Canada also had individually recorded 700 hundred *gināns* however; his collection was not published or released for entire Ismāīlī community.

[153] ITREB stands for "Ismāīlī Tariqah and Religious Education Board" an institution for Ismāīlī religious education. There are ITREB national, regional and local offices almost in every country where the Ismāīlīs live.

created to perform only with the musical instruments. So, how did they adapt the tunes to popular musical style, and or popular songs? Did the drumming change the *ginān* rhythm through popular drum beats? As we know that *gināns* are not sung accompanied with musical instruments inside the *jamā'at-khānas,* therefore, sometimes reciter does not follow *gināns* rhythm properly. Moreover, to popularize *ginān* among the Ismāīlī youth few fast beats were also used accompanied with musical instruments. As a result, some experts of the *ginān* believed that through the innovation of musical instruments and modern beats Ismāīlīs have lost some of the original tunes of *ginān.* This was a time when television was not yet a significant part of daily life; therefore, live performance and getting together was a major source of entertainment and learning During this time, *ginān* accompanied by musical instruments was a good source of entertainment, as well as expression of religious devotion. Gradually, in 1980s, Ismāīlī Tariqah Board decided that singing *ginān* accompanied with musical instruments might affect the original shape of the *ginān* tunes. Then, the Ismāīlī Tariqah Board for Karachi started to restrict the performance of *ginān* in the *jamā'at-khāna* setting mandating that it should be done without musical accompaniment.[154] She believes that after almost two decades of accepting many new melodies of *ginān* and not carrying forward the original tunes, she has taken initiatives to preserve and reintroduce the traditional *ginān* ragas within the community.

Zarina Kamaluddin also believes that *ginān* is not a kind of singing in which you show the members of the community how beautifully you are able to sing. Rather, it is a

[154] Mrs. Zarina Kamaluddin and Kamaluddin, An interview was taken in Karachi, Pakistan, December 2003. For more detail please see the oral sources, Appendix II.

collective effort of how you can sing with the community members. Hence, according to her, it is necessary to keep the *ginān* melodies simple. If one's improvisation precludes the congregation following him or her, then the purpose of *ginān* is not fulfilled. Mrs. Kamaluddin further mentions that the raga does not contradict the *ginān* content. When the devotees sing together, it creates the *Sam'ā*, because singing together combines the community at one devotion.

For finding the original tunes of *ginān*, Zarina Kamaluddin approached some older community members who remembered the settings used before the time of instrumental accompaniment. But she was able to collect no more than two hundred *gināns* recordings and tunes from the senior citizens of the Ismāīlī community. So, how do we find the tunes of the remaining *gināns* whose tunes have been modernized? Because *ginān* tradition musical settings have always been an oral tradition and have not been musically written down, the challenge is how to create appropriate new ragas for *ginān*? To answer this challenge, Zarina Kamaluddin derived her own model of composing new melodies for *ginān*. She proposes that we take the existing melodies of *ginān* and use them as a model to compose new melodies for those *gināns* which are not available from any source. Zarina Kamaluddin states that this methodology of composing new *ginān* melodies was also approved by some senior Ismāīlī scholars such as the late Nooruddin and late Bachal missionaries.[155]

[155] Both scholars and Ismāīlī missionaries late Nooruddin and Bachal worked for the Ismāīlī Tariqah and Religious Board Karachi, for many years; they are well known among the Ismāīlīs from Pakistan for their contribution on the Ismāīlī *gināns*.

Some of her new ragas are based on the following *gināns*:

1) For example *gināns* "Pacham thi Ali Purakh" was set according to the tune of Ginan "Hanspuri Nagari maheen" and "Pachamthi Shana dra"
2) Another example is the *gināns* " Eji Pachamthi Ali Shah Jampo maheen ah wasey" that was set according to the tune of "Satey ji tearey panjawa"

On the other hand, many reciters from Karachi have criticized her model of standardizing *ginān*. In general her students do not accept any other melodies of *ginān* accept those they have learned from Zarina. Therefore, tension exists within the Karachi Ismāīlī community regarding the appropriate recitation of *ginān*.

Zarina Kamaluddin's approach towards authenticity in *ginān* melodies is more traditionalist than that of Hyder Alidina. But her method of composing new tunes for *ginān* is debatable. However, the positive aspect of composing these new *ginān* melodies is that they will serve the community in learning and sharing *ginān* devotion in the prayer hall

Jafersadiq I. Surmawala: Classroom Method

In the early years before Zarina Kamaluddin, Jafersadiq Surmawala took the very important initiative of popularizing and teaching *ginān* in Karachi, Pakistan. Originally from Bombay, India, he learned *ginān* from his family as well as teachers. Due to his melodious voice and easy teaching method, many students from Karachi admired him. He started his *ginān* class as early as 1960, after the *farmān* (directive of religious

guidance) of H.H Karim Aga Khan in Dhaka, Bangladesh concerning about the importance of *ginān* hymns, was issued. Right after this *farmān*, the Ismāīlī Association of Pakistan chairman Wazir Ghulam Haider Bandali approached Jafer Sadiq, mentioning that he recites *ginān* very well and given the recent guidance from Aga Khan, *ginān* classes need to start and his help would be appreciated. Therefore, Jafersadiq Surmawala undertook this responsibility to teach *ginān* for students. Jafer mentions that, at the beginning of his career, he himself knew only a few *gināns* that he had learned through the Ismāīlī religious school when he was younger. The few *gināns* he knew were not enough for him to teach. As a result, he approached elderly community people who were well versed in *ginān* tradition and learned more *gināns*, then began to teach *ginān* to his students. He continued teaching *ginān* for more than thirty years in Karachi and over two hundred students have taken advantage of his *ginān* expertise.

Jafersadiq believes in accepting the diverse melodies and approaches in the recitation of *ginān*, which in his opinion strengthens the beauty and appreciation of the diversity within the community. He even considers the possible use of instruments to strengthen the transmission of *ginān*, especially for Ismāīlī youth who are growing up in the western countries. He suggested that due to language difference in the western countries, it is hard to get the enthusiasm among the younger generation to gain knowledge of *ginān*. Therefore, according to him, it would be a good idea to teach students *ginān* with musical instruments, especially harmonium and the tabla, (Indian drum). This method would attract various youth to not only enjoy the music of *ginān*, but also to understand its

deeper meaning. And due to this method of teaching, the quality of the recitation of *ginān* within the *jamā'at-khāna* will improve.

Music of the Ginān repertoire

The *ginān* repertoire consists essentially of the collection of poetry, composed in various melodies (*tārz, dhūn, rāg*). All *ginān* music has been sung according to its poetry. For Ismailis from Indo-Pakistan, there is no religious devotion without *ginān*. There are *gināns* for every occasion, even for death, happiness, spiritual growth, etc, and the melodies of these *ginān* convey the feeling of the occasion. One of the significant days for Ismāīlīs, is the physical appearance (*didar*) of the Imam (spiritual leader) of the time, *ginān* is always sung at the beginning of *didār* ceremony. In the early morning at about 3:30 am, many Ismāīlīs go to the prayer hall for their spiritual journey. The *ginān* music, here again, plays a key role to experience the eternal peace. It creates a *Samā'*, which naturally focuses the listeners' entire energy towards the divine. For special Ismāīlī occasions such as the Imam's birthday on the 13th December, first day of spring 21st March, on the 11th July the day the present Imam came to throne of his Imāmat and (the day when according to Shiā', Prophet Mohammed legitimized Ali as his successor *Eid-e-Gadir* there are specific *gināns*.

One of the famous *ginān* is "*Aye Raheman*" (O most Gracious and most Merciful) written and composed by the 20th century female poet, Sayyida Imam Begum. According to the Ismāīlī tradition, she was an excellent musician, and would compose her songs accompanying herself with the Sarangi. This song is in a praise of the Imam, the

selections of words are very balanced and powerful. This rendition is sung in a metrical cycle of *rupak* (seven beats, three plus four). Its tonal structure is compatible with *rāg Kafī*, with lowered third and seventh degrees, or E flat and B flat, and uses the occasional characteristic *Kafī -esque* raised to the third degree (E natural). It is unusual according to the *rāg Kafī* to be raised to the third degree. (All transcriptions here are transposed to C.) Please see page 74, example 2, for transcription.

Example 2: *Ginān*, Aay'e Raheman Raheman

The transliteration and the translation of this *ginān* are as follows:

Aay'e Rahem Raheman ab to rahem karo'ge
Here has come the Compassionate, the Merciful

Refrain:
Aaye' Rahem Raheman……
Here has come the Compassionate, the Merciful

Eji Tan man dhan guruku(n) arpan kije
O Brother, To the guru surrender your heart, mind, and possession,
To Ginan e Ginan e Ginan….. ab to rahem Karoge
You will be endowed with knowledge and its illumination.[156]

The second example of a *ginān* is a *Garbī ginān*, written and composed by very famous 13th century Ismāīlī *Pīr*, Shams Sabzwari. According to the Ismāīlī tradition, *Pīr* Shams has composed 28 *Garbīs* during his visit to Gujarat at the festival of Narvatri. The *garbī gināns* are only associated with *Pīr* Shams. All *garbīs* are very upbeat, and share the

[156] G. Allana, *Ginān of Ismāīlī Pīrs*, pp. 316-317

dohā (two lines poetic structure) form of poetry. The *garbī ginān* is sung in a metric cycle of *garba tal*, eight beat (four plus four), very popular for *bhajans* and folk songs. The tonal structure of the *ginān* is in *Rāg Bhairvaī*, which according to Indian classical music is a morning raga. *Bhairvaī* is perhaps the sweetest and most-loved raga in Hindustani music, an all-time favorite of audiences and artists. Often Indian musicians conclude their performance with this raga. In this *ginān* R and G *komāl* (D and E flat) and Dha and Ni *komāl* (A and B flat) are used. Please see page 75, example 3, for transcription.

Example 3: Garbi *ginān*, Pir Nachi ney

Pir nachine kanthe ginanre man,
The Pir dances and recites wisdom (*Ginān*)!
Em samjavine gur kahe chhe re main

Refrain:
O Mother, the Guru explains things thus:

Tame samjo te satni sanre man,
Try and understand the signs of truth (sat)!

Em samjavine gur kahe chhe re man
O Mother, the Guru explains things thus:

Tame jutha shun kidha acharre man,
Why have you adopted such false practices!

Em samjavine gur kahe chhe re man
O Mother, the Guru explains things thus:

Gur kahe chhe varoi varre man
The Guru repeats over and over:

Em samjavine gur kahe chhe re main.[157]
O Mother, the Guru explains things thus:[158]

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[157] Ginan-E-Sharif, Volume 2, English transliteration, pp. 119-120.

The third example is the very popular *ventī ginān* "*Ankh Lari Joi Joi*" (my eyes have become tired), written and composed by Sayyed Fazal Shah. There are various versions of this popular *ventī* sung by Ismāīlīs. According to Jafersadiq Surmawala and Fatima Charania this way of singing this *ginān* is very close to *rag bhairāvī*. However, the melodies do not match and even the rhythmic cycles are totally different. According to Haider Alidina, this *ginān* was originally composed in *rāg Jhinjhoti*. Zarina Kamaludin's version of this *ginān* tunes, is very close to *rāg Bilawal*. Please see examples 4, 5, and 6, three different styles of venti *ginān* transcriptions from page 76-78.

Example 4: Venti *Ginān* Eji Ankh Lari Joi,

Eji Ankh ladi joi joi thaki
O brother, tired by unceasingly watching
Kyare aave maro Shah
My eyes, wearied, continue to be searching,
Partak jani paye padun
So that, with all my Faith, I may touch his feet;
Vahla nami nami karun parnaam
Bowing my head, my beloved I will greet.

Refrain:

Mittha shah samarun main tero naam
Sweet Master, on my lips is your name;
Ya Shah Samarun mein tero naam
O Master, on my lips is your name;
Khudavand samaroon mein tero naam
O Allah, on my lips is your name,[159]

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[158] Kassam, Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance, p. 356.
[159] G. Allana, *Ginans of Ismaili Pirs*, pp. 298-299.

Example 2: *Ginān*, Aay'e Raheman Raheman

NADIM AMIR ALI
GINAN: AYE RAHEMAN, (Raga Mishra Kafi)
Rishto tala
A - Ye — Raheman Rahe ma —— na
a - ba to — Raheman - Ka - ro - ge
A - Ye — Rahe man Raheman
Eji ta-na mana dhana Guva KU
Ava - pa - na Ki — Je —
Tana ma-na dhana Guva Kun
A - va - pana Ki - Je
to gi - na - ne gi - na — na gi na —— na
a - ba - to ra - he man ka ro — ge
A - Ye — Rahe - man Rahe man —

Example 3: Garbi *ginān*, Pir Nachi ney

Shabnum Merali
GARBI GINAN: PIR NACHI NE (Raga Bhairavi)
Dadra tala
Pi-r Na-chi ne Kan-te gi-na-n ve
ma e ma sa-ma-Javi ne gur Kahe-chhe ve ma
Ta-me- Ju-tha shun Ki dha achavve ma E ma
Sa-ma-ja vi-ne gu-va Ka-he che ve ma
Gur Kahe che -va-voi vava-ve-
. ma n e ma Sa-mja vi- ne Gu-va
Ka-he che ve-ma

Example 4: Venti *Ginān* Eji Ankh Lari Joi,

Dr. Haider Alidina
VENTI GINAN: EJI ANKH LARI
(Popular style in Pakistan Raga Bhairavi)
Dadra tala
Ankhlavi Joi-Joi thaki tya-ve mavo shah
Pavtak Ja-ni Paye Pa-du-vahla
nami nami Kavonpava-naam mitha Shah
Samavu main tevo-naam
Ankh lavi Joi-Joi thaki tya-ave-mavo shah
Pavtaka Jani paYe Pa-du-vahla
nami nami Kavon pava-naam mitha Shah
Samavu main Te-vo-naam

Example 5: Venti *Ginān* Eji Ankh Lari Joi,

(Zarina Kamaluddin's Group) Venti Ginan: Eji Ankh Lari
Raga Bilawal
Eji Ankh lari — Joi -
Joi tha — ki tyare a — ve.
mo — vo sha — ha
pa — ra — ta — ka Ja — ne pa — e —
parun — wa — la
Parata — ka Ja — ni pa — e —
Parun — wa — la.

Example 6: Venti *Ginān* Eji Ankh Lari Joi,

Fatima Charania
Venti Ginan: Eji Ankh Lari
(Mishra-Bhairavi)
Tonic G
E-ji Aankh Ladi Joi Joi Tha Ki Kya ve aa-ve
mayo sha——h
Parta Ka Ja-ni Pa-ye—Pa-vu
Par ta Ja ni Pa Ye Pa vu
na-mi nami Ka—vo Para naw mi—ti sha
ah Sa-ma-vu-me—te vo-naaw
Ya shah—— Sa-ma-vu-me-te—vonaam
Khu—dha vi dha—— Sh-ma-vu me—te
vo naam Sa-ma-vume te—vo—naan-mitha shah
Sa-ma-vu-me_te-vo naam.

Another very famous *ginān* "*taariye tu taar*" (Oh God save us) is very famous among the youth. This *ginān* was written and composed by the famous Ismāīlī *Pīr* Sadardin from the 14th century. The melodic pattern of this *ginān* is close to *rag khamāj*, so we can say that it seems like rag *mishra khamaj* (means it contains components of another *rāg*). The rhythmic cycle of this *ginān* is *Kerwā* (eight beat cycle 4x4) a very popular beat, usually used in *qawwālī* and *ghazal*.

Example 7: *Ginān*, Eji Tariyen Tun Taran

Eji Tariyen tun taran haar Khudavand
O brother, God alone will guide me to salvation
avar na tare dooja koi ali tuhin tuhin tuhin.....
None else can take me to that destination
O Ali, for you I call, O Ali, Ali, Ali,[160]

During my field research, I found two versions of this famous *ginān* "*Malaka Jina*"(you have filled with many treasures), written and composed by Sayyed Ghulam Ali Shah. The interesting thing is one popular version is sung in a same way by Ismāīlīs in different community. However, another version was adopted very recently from an Ismāīlī community member from East Africa. The tune of the second version was influenced by very famous song of the Indian movie "*Beju Bawra*" entitled *Oh Duniya ke Rakhwale* (means oh the savior of the world). The *filmi rag* is very close to the *rāg Asavāri*, which is a late morning rag. The traditional tune of this *ginān* is very close to "*Rāg Bilawāl*",

[160] G. Allana, *Ginans of Ismaili Pirs*, pp. 180-181

most commonly performed with a variety of a large group of Indian musicians. In the melodic pattern of this particular raga Ga and natural Ni (E and B natural) are the important notes, but Pa and Sa (G and C) are sustained as well. The *talas* cycle of this *ginān* is *kehrwa* (eight beat cycle 4x4).

Example 8: *Ginān*, Eji Maal Kha Jina

Eji Maal kha jina bohot ja bhariya,
You have gathered wealth and possessions in plenty,
Oosme(n) nahi(n) kuch tera
Zero will your share be, your hands empty.
Rang mahol sab bhool jayesi,
These glittering places you will leave behind,
Jangal hoyesi dhera
In the wilderness yourself you will deserted find.
Refrain:
Kiya neend sove man mera
O my Soul, why, why, do you sleep?
Shah samaran ki vellaa, mawlaa samarann ki verra
Fresh the rememberance of the Murshid keep,
kiyaa neend sove man mera
Fresh the remembrance of the Lord keep.[161]

The final example is a very famous *ginān* often perform with *zikr* (remembrance of God, Prophet Mohammed and Ali). This practice is prevalent among Ismāīlīs in Edmonton, the form of the *zikr* is "Ya Ali Ya Mohammed"(oh prophet Mohammed peace be upon you and oh Ali) and the *ginān* is "*Kalpat Jalpat*" (unreal and false is this illusory existence)

[161] G. Allana, *Ginans of Ismaili Pirs*, pp. 306-307

by *Pīr* Hasan Kabirdin was (a very prominent Ismāīlī missionary from the fifteen century), well known within the community for his melodies *ventī ginān* (with utmost pleading). This *ginān* composition is very close to *rāg Bhairāv*, all seven notes can be used in ascending passages, although many artists omit Re and Pa (D and G). A distinctive feature of *bhaīrv* is the slow oscillation on Dha and Re (A and D) which are traditionally regarded as the sonant and consonant. Some musicians believe that *Bhairāv* some musicians still represents awesome grandeur, and fright.[162] The rhythmic cycle of this *ginān* is teen *tal* (16 beat cycle 4x4x4x4).

This *ginān* first start with the chanting of *Zikr* eight times in the same *rāg Bhairāv,* then follow to the first stanza. After the end of first stanza again the *zikr* starts, again eight times the name of Ali and Prophet Mohammed is repeated. The same process applies for recitation of whole ginan, at the end the *zikr* goes faster and the beats follows the faster rhythm as a result singers as well as listeners go into ecstasy.

Example 9: *Ginān* often perform with *zikr*

Eji Kalpat jalpat maya ye mohi
O brother, why allow yourself a passing glow to tempt?
So rakhe jeev dauzakhe jaye ho Sami
Beware: going to hell pre-empt.
Refrain:
So Allah goon tera, piya goon tera
Allah is Merciful; my Beloved is Merciful,

[162] Kaufmann, *The Ragas of North India*, p. 233, 1968

Saheb goon tera, Ya Shah avgoon bahot hameraji
Blessings are yours; my sins are plentiful.
sab goonhe bandedeke fazal karo moraa Saheb
Exonerate this slave from his sins in full.[163]

Analysis of the three methods:

If we want to standardize the above *ginānns* according to the classical Indian ragas then which raga shall we select to standardize the *ginān*? As I have shown previously in my examples, there are four different ragas of the same *ginānns* available and sung widely by the Ismāīlī community from Pakistan to East Africa and from Europe to North America. All of *ginānns* create the same sentiments according to the way the community is emotionally attached with them. So, how can we evaluate this *ginān*? In which parameter can we judge it? My understanding of the music of *ginān* is that we have no manuscripts to confirm the original ragas of the *ginān*. Also, according to Hindustani classical music, improvisation plays a very significant role in performance. Therefore, when the professional Sufi musician Abida Parveen sings *ginān*, she sings it in a very different style from the rest of the community performers. Second, Zarina Kamaluddin as well as Jafersadiq Surmawala, learned *ginān* from older community members in Pakistan. Some perofrmers have also learned *ginān* from their elders in East Africa and now in the Western world. So, how do we confirm which way of singing *ginān* is appropriate? One argument that Zarina has made against the *rāg* of Jafersadiq and his version of *ginān* is that it has taken many features from popular Indian music. Also, he has added some extra words to make the *ginān* more beautiful for recitation.

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[163] G. Allana, *Ginans of Ismaili Pirs*, pp. 258-259

Furthermore, to popularize *ginān* among youth from 1960 to 1970, Jafer Sadiq has recomposed few *gināns* to set it with the accompaniment of musical instruments and has performed in many *ginān mushāiros* (a special event of celebrating and singing *ginān*). These *gināns*, later on, became the part of daily Ismāīlī prayer. If we accept that Jafer Sadiq composed the new raga of "*Ankh Larī*" just to popularize this *ginān* in *rag bairvi*, then we need to understand how community people have accepted. There are many versions of *bhajan* and *kirtān* that are always performed and acceptable by Hindus and Sikhs in their prayer halls. As far as the poetry of the *ginān* is concerned, if the poetry is not being changed and the new melodies are not being copied from any *filmi* or popular music, during my field research, I have noticed that some community members do not see any problem with it. The *qasida* (pl. *qasaid*, ode) and *maddah* (praise) tradition of Ismāīlīs from Central Asia and Afghanistan follow the same rules. There are various ways to perform the same *qasidā* and people find it more acceptable to perform it at the prayer hall. In my discussion with some trained classical musicians from India about Hindu *bhajans* and their ragas, Mrs. Wasanti Paranjape mentioned, "The ragas of the same *bahjan* changes in India in every fifty kilometers. You can get the same poetry of Mera bahi[164] but composed in various different ragas by musicians. All of them are widely accepted by the general audience of India".[165] Some ragas also differ from region to region, but the sentiments of the ragas are very much attached to the poetry of *bhajan*. As with Sufi *kafīs*, when Abida sings and Nusrat sings, both follow their own way of singing and have their own raga. Each sound unique to the audience and yet, with convey

[164] Mera Bahi is a famous female *bhakti* saint from Rajasthan, India.
[165] Mrs. W. Paranjape, Edmonton, Canada, July 2005.

the sentiments of the Sufi poetry. In a same way the Sikhs *shābd* and Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai's *sūr* music[166] even though in both cases, the composer prescribes the particular *rāgs* and it should presumably be performed in the same way. However, even then you can find the different way and style of singing Shah Latif poetry.

Conclusion

We have almost no historical proof that shows in which *rāg* Ismāīlī *Pīrs* have composed *gināns*. If the emotion and sentiments of *ginān* can continually be communicated with different ragas, then the standardization of *ginān* according to only one rag is problematic. If we are using the same ragas that our ancestors used for centuries and not borrowing any popular tunes from *Bollywood* songs (Hindi movie songs), then some community members do not see any problem, regardless of not changing the poetry of ginan. It is possible that some of the *Bollywood* tunes might sound beautiful but it will distract reciter from religious message and remind them of the *Bollywood* movie, therefore, one's mind will be diverted from the religious sentiments. Thus, I do not see any need for standardizing.

In Ismāīlī *ginān*, various languages and dialects have been used. Only few *gināns* contained the complete element of one single language. We can easily find elements of six to seven different dialects in one *ginān*. Because of its regional and local differences, the *ginān* music becomes more attractive and sweet. It digests many beautiful components of poetry and melody to which every reciter feels some personal attachment.

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[166] A "Sur" music is usually refers the Shah Abdul Latif poetry collection. According to N. A. Baloch "*sur*" music stands between classical music and folk music from IndoPakistan.

If this diverse approach was acceptable for centuries and communities have been accepting it, then it might be possible that Ismāīlī *Pīrs* have taken many local musical influences from various regions of India and composed *ginān* to pass the religious message to the masses. As Ismāīlī tradition says from the 13th century that *Pīr* Shams participated in the *Navrātrī* Hindu festival, and danced, sung and composed *garbī ginān* in the same musical styles as Hindus were familiar with; therefore, I feel that there is a strong need to preserve the tunes of *ginān*. It might bring up some ideas of the evolution of Indian classical *rāgs* as well folk music. However, to standardize the *ginān* according to only one canon would not justify its devotion. *Ginān* was composed in many languages and it also carries various diverse elements of local music. Therefore, rather then emphasizing and finding the right ragas, there is a strong need to carry on tradition as open as it was always. If we fix *ginān* in a small frame of rules, then we will lose its bigger picture of love, which is more beautiful and colorful. Therefore, this study shows that all the other devotional genre of Indian music such as *qawwālī, Kāfī, bhajan* and *kirtan* gives more importance to the devotional aspect of poetry and appreciates the differences of region and languages. During my field research in Karachi, I noticed that due to conflict of standardizing *ginān* from only one way, various Ismāīlī youth do not wish to learn more *ginān*, not because they do not like the music of *ginān* but because they are confused about the ragas of *ginān* in which raga they should learn *ginān*.

Chapter 4

An Ethnographic Case Study of *Ginān* in the Diaspora Edmonton

"Music is the sound instrument that moves a soul closer to God and I found my God through music" Anar Kanji, A female ginān singer from Vancouver Canada.[167]

Introduction

A few months back, at the University of Alberta, I was looking for the office of Interdisciplinary Studies. My friend directed me towards the Humanities building; I did not know exactly which floor the Interdisciplinary office was. I took the lift and got off on the 3rd floor, where I saw an office. It was not the department which I was looking for however, I saw an Indian lady at the office counter; her name was Shamim Datoo. I asked her for the directions to the department which I was looking for. She gave me directions and then asked me about my ethnic and religious identity. Are you an Ismāīlī Muslim? She asked, I replied yes indeed. Then, I greeted her, she asked me about my studies and origin. I introduced myself to her saying that I come from Pakistan, graduated from the Institute of Ismaili Studies, UK, and currently undertaking my studies on the musical and religious aspect of Ismāīlī Muslim *ginān*. Shamim was very happy to know about my ethnic identity but even more so regarding my area of interest on the Ismāīlī hymns *ginān*. She gave me her phone number and invited me to visit her home. Then, she stoped me for a second, went to her desk, and took out a *ginān* book called "*Ananth Akhado*" literally "a gathering of unlimited souls in as eternal context". It was five hundred verses

[167] Anar Kanji's information is taken from her *ginān* album.

long *Grānth*, written and composed by the fourteenth century Ismāīlī Pir (missionary) Hassan Kabiruddin, translated and published in Toronto.[168] She gave me the book as a special gift. I asked Shamim about the book and why she keeps it in her office. She replied, "I have loved *ginān* since my childhood, I always keep the *ginān* book with me, whenever I get leisure time, I read, and learn the wealth of knowledge about our religion, ethics, and faith through the teachings of *ginān*".

This was quite unusual for me to see the Ismāīlī woman keeping a *ginān* book at her office, as a source of obtaining religious knowledge and wisdom. Not only is this story of Shamim interesting, it also opens up various issues regarding the quest for learning and collecting a repertoire of *ginān* in the western Diaspora environment. Why did she keep a *ginān* book with her? What is the significance of *ginān* to its lovers, listeners and performers in the west? What is in *ginān* which has been passing through from generation to generation within Ismāīlī Muslim community that attracts? Which kind of inspiration do people get from *ginān*? Why do Ismāīlīs want to continue in a diaspora Edmonton of learning the musical tradition Ismāīlī *ginān*? The above story points to a whole new concept of the importance of *ginān* in the Canadian diaspora context. Shamim has been living in Edmonton, Canada for the last two decades, still loves to speak Indian languages and keeps her Indian tradition alive through learning and teaching *gināns*. All the *gināns* are in Indian vernacular languages which almost all community members love to learn and sing.

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[168] Merali, Karim, *Anant Akhado*, A translation and transliteration. Toronto, 1995.

In this chapter, I will address some issues regarding the diaspora condition of Ismailis in the western world. Moreover, I will analyze how the transmission of *ginān* takes place through various media particularly in the Diaspora western context.

The term "Diaspora" and Ismailis

At various occasions during my field research particularly with East African khoja Ismailis I noticed that, the connection of South Asia is not very important for them. There are various reasons, particularly financial and social factors play a key role. However, disagreement of East African khoja Ismailis from South Asia has brought to light some interesting ways to think about their ethnic identity. There are various causes for that, there is no one "homeland" in which Ismailis can relate their connections, and they are wide spread all over the world. Also, within the Ismaili community the authority mostly come from an Imam (spiritual leader), not from the place, which makes a centralized control system, run by directly Imam through his various institutions.[169]

The term "Diaspora" derived from the Greek, means the dispersion through sowing or scattering, some time referred to the "exile of the Jews from their historic homeland and their dispersion throughout many lands, signifying as well the oppression and moral degradation implied by that dispersion".[170] By the passage of time the definition of Diaspora has evolved and expanded further and held by the Jewish experience with the

[169] Aly Kassam-Remtulla, *Dis)Placing Khojahs: Forging Identities, Revitalizing Islam, and Crafting Global Ismailism*, Bachelor Thesis, chapter two, 1999.

[170] Safran, William, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return." 1991, p. 83.

idea of exile and oppression. Furthermore, the above definition does not shed light on other dispersed communities.[171]

The term "Diaspora" mostly looks to the idea of homeland as sites of authenticity and tradition.[172] Often emphasis is given to the idea of origin. Few scholars have come to various questions of inherent and assumed link between the homeland and diasporas.[173] Mostly, the concept of "Diaspora" emphasized connections with the dispersed communities and has special importance to the place of origin. Contrary to this the Ismaili case is unique and important. The East African Ismailis who mostly migrated to Canada in the mid seventies do not consider their ethnic connection with South Asia, also they do not have desire to go back to East Africa. When, an insider of community member Ali Kassam, asked questions of the East African Ismailis in the United States about the places where their families come from, few older Ismailis were able to provide details of villages or regions in Gujarat where their ancestors were from. Most Ismailis from East Africa were not aware of their "ancestral homes" As Farida, a middle aged and middle class woman explains:

> I was born in Mobassa. My great grandparents....may be I would say [they came from] India. I have no idea [from where in India]. We had no contact

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[171] Clifford, James, "Introduction: Partial Truths." *In Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, James Clifford and George Marcus, eds. Berkeley, California: University, 1986 p 305.

[172] Brah, Avtar, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, London, Routledge, 1996, p 190.

[173] Ghosh, Amitav, "The Diaspora in Indian Culture", *Public Culture*, 1989, p. 76.

really. That's what they say, that people came from India to the [East Africa] coast. I have no contacts in India.[174]

Another male, middle age Bashir explains

> I was born in East Africa; my father is from Kisii and my mother from the surrounding area of Marindi. Their parents came from India, from Katiawar. I don't know much about it, about our roots. All his [my father's] brothers came, so no roots to know, to go back to.[175]

Another important issue tied up with the term Diaspora is "myth of return" to their country of origin. This idea might fit with Jews of experienced exile, suppressed and wish to return to their holy land. However, Ismaili condition is entirely different, particularly in terms of transnational Ismaili community, which has neither homeland nor a common point of origin for all Ismailis.

Gayatri Gopinath in her studies of Bhangra music shows:

> Demands that 'India' be written into the Diaspora as yet another diasporic location, rather than remaining a signifier of an original, essentialzed identity

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[174] Aly Kassam-Remtulla, *Dis)Placing Khojahs: Forging Identities, Revitalizing Islam, and Crafting Global Ismailism*, Bachelor Thesis, chapter two, 1999.

[175] Ibid.

around which a diasporic network is constructed and to which it always refers.[176]

If we removed the idea of homeland from centrality of the term "Diaspora", then, it allows dispersed culture and identity to gain legitimacy. Clifford emphasizes that "transnational connections linking Diasporas need to be articulated primarily through a real or symbolic homeland".[177] Since the Ismailis do not trace their ethnic roots to a single place, nor they originally come from one geographical area. The complex histories of the conversion of Ismailis displacement we cannot look at Ismailis from one dominant religious centre. Ismailis are very adaptable in terms of culture and land. Wherever they go, if they find opportunities and resources, they make new land as their home. However, they always continue with their religious practices and rituals among them recitation of *ginan* is essential.

Transmission of *Ginān*

More or less in every religion the sacred music plays a key function in a ritual setting where devotees bring back their senses and intensifie attention to the present moment.[178] It is a moment in which the devotee fully surrender their emotions towards God and

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[176] Gopinath, Gayatri. 1995 "'Bombay, U.K., Yuba City': Bhangra Music and the Engendering of Diaspora." Diaspora p. 313.

[177] Clifford, James, "Introduction: Partial Truths." *In Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, James Clifford and George Marcus, eds. Berkeley, California: University, 1986, p 36.

[178] Kassam, Tazim, Teaching Religion and Music, American Academy of Religion, Religious Studies News, AAR Edition as a special pullout section focusing on teaching and learning around a particular theme, concern, or setting. Spring 2001, Vol. 16, No.2, p. 1

communicate with him through melodies ginan. In South Asia, chanting and singing religious scripts and devotional songs is the fundamental practice of Islam as well as Hinduism and Sikhism. It also remains important to a religious specialist who maintains appropriate standards for transmission.[179] In general, followers of the religions, mentioned above recite scriptures and devotional poetry as a major part of their daily religious practices. The singing devotional poetry and scripture is a significant medium for both individual and collective religious expression in vernacular languages.[180] According to Shils, tradition is "any thing which is transmitted or handed down from the past to the present".[181] The key word is 'transmission' which is continuing in terms of ritual and religious practices particularly learning *ginān* in the Ismāīlī community. In the following section we will see how the cultural and musical transmission takes place in the Diaspora Western countries.

The importance of learning and sharing ginan for Ismailis is a vital part of their religious ceremonies. H.H. Prince Karim Aga Khan, issued a *farmān* in Karachi 16th December 1964 of the unique importance of this tradition:

> Many times I have recommended to my spiritual children that they should remember the gināns, that they should understand the meaning of these gināns and that they should carry these meanings in their hearts. It is most important that my spiritual children from wherever they may come should, through the ages and from generation to generation, hold to this tradition, which is so unique and so important to my jamā'at (community).[182]

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[179] Qureshi, Regula, "Recorded Sound and Religious Music: The Case of *Qawwālī*" *Media and the Transformation of Religion in South Asia*, 1995, p. 139.
[180] Ibid. p. 139.
[181] Shils. Edward, *Tradition*, Chicago, University of Chicago, 1981, p. 12.
[182] Kalam-e-Imam-e-Zaman, Farman to Asia and Middle East, (1957-1993), p 53.

Learning and singing *ginān* is not only a part of Ismāīlī daily ritual but also an important aspect of religious teaching. Ismāīlīs recite *ginān* in a *jamā'at-khāna* twice a day, in the early morning as well in evening. According to Shiraz:

> Ginān̄s work at several levels, firstly for the reciter, it is deep and expressive however, it also depends on the knowledge of reciter. The important thing about ginān is as soon as you start reciting it everybody joins you. As a result, ginān creates some kind of normalization in jamā'at, where everyone is participating no matter how good the reciter is. When community sings together, it creates an environment of devotion where everyone is equal, and it also develop a sense of unity and attachment.[183]

The recitation of *ginān* as a chorus is central to the *jamā'at-khāna* ceremony. It is similar to Sikh and Hindu tradition however, it is different from the Sufi music of *qawwālī* performance. During *qawwālī* performance, usually singers are well trained and professional in their field, they perform within their group, and the audience enjoys their singing, but they do not participate with them. Therefore, the participation of the community recitation is greater in Ismāīlī *ginān* tradition where everybody male, female, seniors and children take a part in singing during the religious ceremonies. Another, important element of *ginān* is that, it is recited as a part of religious worship inside prayer hall. A *qawwālī* usually is performed outside the Sufi shrines. And *qawwālī* does not have any relation with the ritual ceremonies of the Muslim mosque. However, *ginān* is a very important element of religious ceremony. Moreover, it has a special significance according to the time and specific occasions. The *ginān̄s* differs from *Bhajans*, and *Shabd*

[183] Shiraz Kanji, interview, Edmonton, April 2004.

in this category, because they are not only devotional hymns for the praise of God, but it is also a teaching of Ismāīlī faith. According to Jafer Ali Surmawala "*ginān* is a teaching of the faith of Ismāīlī Islam, in fact it is the message of holy Koran in various Indian languages which our Ismāīlī *Pīrs* have given us since many centuries ago".[184] *Ginān* tradition enriches the ritual understanding and prepares Ismāīlīs for religious devotion. According to Shiraz,

> There are certain *gināns* which prepare us for certain occasions. And I personally grew up in a condition, where ginān was a necessary part of daily life. Still, whenever, I hear the ginān "Dhan, dhan ajno dahado" (Happy and Blessed is this Day) it takes me back to my childhood, particularly the Imam's birthday, whenever, I listen to it. It brings me back lots of memories and also it prepares me emotionally for the particular occasion.[185]

A) Learning *ginān* at home

The *ginān* is an oral tradition similar to Sufi folk songs from India and Pakistan. The role of women is significant with continuation of this tradition. In general, most Sunni and Shi'ā women do not attend the daily religious ceremony inside the mosque, they usually pray at home. Contrary to this, Ismāīlī women go to daily *jamā'at-khāna* to not only perform religious ceremonies but also socialize and participate in other community activities. The attendance of women is a little higher than men. In general, women also participate more in learning *ginān* than men. I remembered my visit to Toronto last year, when I asked a 73 years old woman about her learning experience of *ginān*. She described to me that, "*ginān* flows in my blood, it is everything for me". She started to

[184] Jaffer Ali Surma Wala, interview, Edmonton, April 2004.
[185] Shiraz Kanji, interview, Edmonton, April 2004.

learned *ginān* when she was only few months old, her mother used to sing *ginān* when she was in her baby swing. Her mother's beautiful voice taught her how important *ginān* tradition is. She has applied the same method with her children, and now her children continue the same tradition and transfer *ginān* to their children. As a result, we can see how the *ginān* learning tradition has been passed through her family for the last three generations. Tazim Kassam, beautifully expressed her childhood experienced of learning *ginān* that:

> I remember being bundled into the car as a child on our trips to the coast in Kenya and even before my father had shifted into gear, he would have begun to sing a gināns, Bhajan, or Gīt (all devotional songs in Hindi or Gujarati). No journey was without them. We also took along a collection of cassette tapes of devotional songs. There seemed nothing unusual about singing gināns or hearing qawwalīs on the way to the beach, city, or school.... As a child, I learned to articulate my first requests to God and to express my first feelings of devotion and surrender through the language and music of gināns. Singing was a thoroughly portable and enjoyable activity and I was convinced God paid special attention to prayers, which were soulfully sung.[186]

It is a very common practice among Ismāīlī families that they always learn *ginān* first with their elder family members at home. In a same manner, I have learned *ginān* since my early age, my mother always motivated me to learn and sing *ginān*. Whenever, my siblings and I recited *ginān* or *Dua* (Ismāīlī prayer) we were offered gifts from *jamā'at-khāna* and from our parents. My niece Aaliya Fidai from Chicago, USA has been reciting

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[186] Kassam, Tazim, Teaching Religion and Music, American Academy of Religion, Religious Studies News, AAR Edition as a special pullout section focusing on teaching and learning around a particular theme, concern, or setting. Spring 2001, Vol. 16, No.2, p. 1

*ginān*s from the tender age of four in the local *jamā'at-khāna*. Her family, particularly her grandmother, always encourages her in this task. In a same way Dr. Allana, described his early days experience of learning *ginān* in his book entitled "*Ginān of Ismāilī Pīrs*":

> Ever since my early childhood, I recall hearing the sweet music of ginān*s*. When I was little boy, my mother, Sharfibai would lift me, put me in her lap and sing to me the ginān of Ismāilī Pīrs. She had a very serene and melodies voice.....My initiation into the realms of poetry and music was through the *ginān*s.[187]

The above experience of Dr. Allana shows how his interest developed in learning about the *ginān* and how deep emotional attachment he had with the music of *ginān*s. The *ginān* tradition is a living musical heritage of thousand of Ismāilīs from Indo-Pakistan, and its initial training commonly starts from home.

B) *Jamā'at-khāna* and *ginān*

The second place of learning *ginān* is in *jamā'at-khāna*, a common place for a worship of Ismāilī Muslims. Perhaps it is a compulsory element of *jamā'at-khāna* as a daily ritual; where every member of the community would wish to learn *ginān*. Most of the time devotees would like to be trained in those *ginān*s which have beautiful melodies. It is an honor for anyone within a community to recite *ginān* in *jamā'at-khāna*. Usually, good reciters, (I mean who have beautiful voices and better command on the singing of *ginān*) get the opportunity to recite *ginān* in the Ismāilī's main celebrations such as Imam's birthday, Navroz (on the 21st March, first day of spring) etc. Singing *ginān* at the prayer

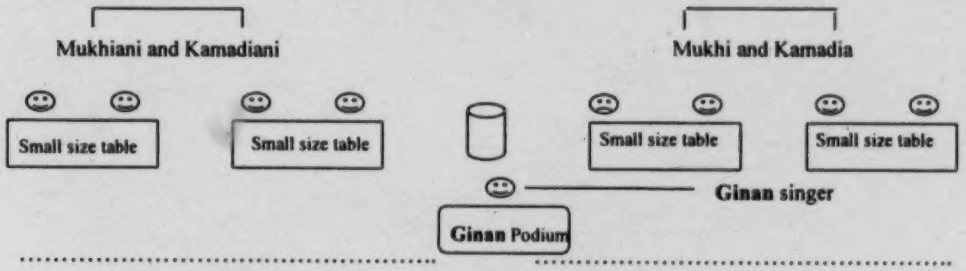
[187] G. Allana. *Ginans of Ismaili Pirs, Rendered Into English verses*, 1984, p. 1.

hall where almost every community member sings together creates a mystical environment *samā'* in which through magnificent tunes and magical poetry elevates the souls of its listeners. Please see the table 3, *ginān* in a *jamā'at-khāna* setting.

Often community members appreciate if the reciter performs well that means sings good and also correctly pronounce the *ginān* poetry during the ritual ceremony. *Ginān* performance in a prayer hall creates a bridge between ritual ceremonies and prayer, because *ginān* singing is a natural form of prayer, which prepares devotees to submit their soul to his beloved God. There is no single day even in a morning or evening when *ginān* is not recited. Many times I have noticed in Edmonton that if any one else recite *ginān* well in prayer hall, the youth, after the religious ceremony get finished, run and greet the reciter. Almost every youth who were born and raised in Edmonton do not understand *ginān's* meaning but its music appeals them so that they could not resist to appreciate the reciter. *Ginān* communicates in many levels for those who understand its poetry enjoy differently and for those who do not understand the meaning enjoy listening to its delightful melodies. *Ginān* are always performed at *jamā'at-khānas* in a communal setting where everyone sings together, which combines the whole community as a one spirit.

Table 3: *Ginān* in a *jamā'at-khāna* setting:

***Jamā'at-khāna* Setting**



(Left side females sit on the floor)

(Right side males sit on the floor

C) Special *ginān* classes

Another way of learning *ginān* is through special classes. Since the last century, Ismāīlīs are very organized in terms of institutions development. Almost all over the world, wherever Ismāīlīs live they learn their religious tradition through Tariqah and Religious Education Board. All Ismāīlīs religious schools come under the direct supervision of Ismaili Tariqah Boards. In Canada, religious school called *Bayat-ul-Ilm* (a house of knowledge); in Pakistan and India it is called "Religious schools" or "Night schools".

More than ninety five percent of Ismāīlīs send their children to these schools to learn about their faith and religion in Pakistan. The *gināns* has been always an important part of religious curriculum in these schools. Where selective *gināns* student learn from grade one through twelve. By the time student finish their religious schooling they learned a good number of *gināns*. In most cases, each year students learn at least three to four *gināns*.

Learning *ginān* in a religious school is very important as described by the Imam Prince Karim Aga Khan in Bombay, November 9, 1967 said:

> I was very happy to listen to my jamā'at reciting our gināns. I have said in the past (that) this is a Wonderful Tradition, and it is a tradition in which we must not lose in the years ahead, and I hope that the younger spiritual children will continue to learn the gināns that the Association gives you for learning at your religious Night School.[188]

Another way of learning *ginān* is through specific *ginān* classes. These classes are very common among the Ismāīlīs from South Asia. There are different levels of learning *gināns* in these specific classes. In general, it is divided according to age and experience. I remembered in December 2003, when I was interviewing the *ginān* teacher Jafersadiq Surmawala from Pakistan, he has taught *ginān* for more than thirty years in Garden, Karachi. His first *ginān* class started in 1961, from the special guidance of the Ismāīlī Tariqah Board Pakistan. Initially forty *ginān* were selected for a two and a half years long class. After successfully teaching forty *gināns*, he was requested by his students to teach

[188] Ginan-e-Sharif, Our Wonderful Tradition. Vol 2. (Year does not mentioned) p. V.

more *gināns* and also by the Tariqah Board; meanwhile new students also wanted to join them in *ginān* classes. In the year 1964-65, Jafer Sadiq started a class for new students but also continued the old student class in the name of senior *ginān* class. The process continues every year, new students would like to join *ginān* classes but old students do not want to leave him. At one point, he said, there were four different levels of *ginān* classes running at one time. Due to his busy schedule his students took over the teaching of junior levels, and he only taught senior students. In the entire period of almost thirty years of teaching *ginān* he has taught almost two hundred and fifty *gināns*. I asked him if he always knew that many *gināns*, he replied "no, it was initially student's wishing to continue *ginān* classes, and they only wanted to learn from me. Therefore, I first learned *ginān* from elder community members, sometimes I traveled from village to village to find people from whom I could learn new *gināns*, and I recorded them in tape recorder, learned them myself and then taught them to my students in *ginān* classes". Today Jafersadiq students are spread all over the world and his students themselves have become teachers of *ginān* classes. A good example is available over here in Edmonton in which his own son Jafer Ali teach *ginān* to the community members. Jafer Ali has been living in Edmonton for the last four years. He also holds strongly to this tradition and continues reciting and teaching *ginān* in the religious school. Jafer Ali mentioned that "when my father knew that I have started a *ginān* class over here in Edmonton he was extremely happy, I have no words to express how happy he was, he gave me lots of prayers, and shared his feelings that at least someone in his own family has continued the *ginān* tradition alive". Among the Ismāīlī community in Edmonton, Jafer Ali has gained lots of respect and received wonderful respect from his students. He says:

> My students do not understand the meanings of ginān, they do not have any connection with the culture of Indo-Pakistan however, they love to learn ginān, and they love the music (melodies) of ginān. The students' parents told me that their children sing gināns every time, especially, when they are driving their children to schools. I am surprised to see what a positive response I have received from these children and parents regarding learning ginān.[189]

The above statement of Jafer Ali is clear, that even though children who were born and raised in Edmonton would love to recite *gināns*. The major reason is the motivation of their parents as well as the opportunity for students to recite in the *jamā'at-khānas*. In addition, the beautiful melodies attract students to learn and share *ginān* traditions.

D) *Mehfil-e- Ginān* (a celebration of *Ginān*) and *Mushiro* (a lyrical poetry celebration)

Mehfil-e-Ginān and *Ginān Mushiro* are celebrations in which Ismāīlīs perform *ginān*, sometimes accompanied with musical instruments and sometime without musical instruments within the community. These celebrations are very popular in the Ismāīlī community. Almost all age groups participate on these occasions. In 2002, an excellent *Ginān Mushiro* was organized by the Ismāīlī Tariqah and Religious Board for Edmonton, in which, members from all three *jamā'at-khānas* in Edmonton participated. It was held at the Jubilee Auditorium, Edmonton. Almost two thousand community members attended this celebration. First of all, to select reciters for this celebration, an announcement took place in all *jamā'atkhānas*, from which more than one hundred reciters applied for audition. Finally, almost thirty-five reciters were selected for *ginān*

[189] Jafer Ali Surma Wala, Interview, Edmonton, April 2004.

Mushiro performance. It took almost six months for rehearsals and finally a successful *Ginān Mushiro* was presented in Edmonton. The same kind of *Ginān Mushiro* and *Mehfils* are common among the Ismāīlīs in South Asia as well as in East Africa. These platforms also provide an opportunity for a community to learn and share their wonderful tradition *ginān*. In the past, some *Mehfils*, and *Mushiro* were also organized in front of the Imam (spiritual leader). The Imam always appreciates these kinds of occasions where community shares their love and devotion to Imam through singing *gināns*. In Karachi, 16th December 1964, on the occasion of *Mehfil-e-Ginān*, H.H the Prince Karim Aga Khan said:

> "Tonight, however, is a very special occasion. I would be surprised if ever such a big Mehfil-e-Ginān has ever been held, and I congratulate my spiritual children here tonight for being present on this unique occasion".[190]

E) <u>The *Ginān* Books</u>

The *ginān* is an oral tradition; the earliest manuscripts of *ginān* are available from the seventeenth century.[191] The manuscripts were written in Khojkī (or Khojakī) is the name of the script that was used by the Ismāīlīs from Indian Subcontinent to record their religious literature. Khojkī script originating in Sind and is commonly used to transcribe several languages including Sindhi, Gujarati, Hindustani, and Persian.[192] In the late 19th and 20th centuries various printing presses started in subcontinent. Already by the end of the 19th century, various lithographs were published in the Khojkī script under the name

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[190] Kalam-e-Imam-e-Zaman, Farman to Asia and Middle East, (1957-1993), p. 53.
[191] Asani, Ali, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment*, 2002, p. 100.
[192] Ibid. p. 100.

of individual members of the Ismāīlī community.[193] In the first decade of 20th century a more centralized system was introduced and controlled by the Ismāīlī institutions. Under the community official press in Bombay, Lalji Devraj began producing a large number of books, mostly *ginān* texts, in the Khojkī script. In general, many Ismāīlīs believe that Devraj published editions are the authentic source of *ginānic* literature.[194] Due to printing problems in Khojkī, hence as early as 1910-11, the Gujarati script began to appear as an alternative, and by the 1930, it was commonly used in printing Ismāīlī religious texts. In the year 1970, in Pakistan Urdu was introduced as a national language to transliterate *ginān*, and in East Africa the English language version was introduced.[195] The transliteration of *ginān* throughout the century has also made a significant effect on *ginān*. The transliteration of *ginān* and migration of Ismāīlīs from Indian subcontinent have made a significant impact on *ginān*. According to Shiraz, in East Africa, Ismāīlī lost the cultural milieu in which *ginān* were originally composed and written. Secondly, the transliteration of *ginān* from Khojkī to Gujarati and then Gujarati to the English has also effect of pronunciation. According to Shiraz, "there are many words in Indian vernacular languages, which cannot transliterate in English. So, in terms of culture and language East African have some how lost their connection to *ginānic* languages". However, in terms of migration from East Africa to Canada, Shiraz believed that "the element of language and culture is further lost. The generations who have been born and raised in western countries do not have much access to Indian culture and languages therefore they

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[193] Asani, Ali, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment*, 2002, p. 109.
[194] Ibid. p. 109.
[195] Ibid. p. 109.

do not understand the background theme and knowledge of *ginān*".[196] However, Aman Haji, (who was born and raised in Calgary) believes they still enjoy and cherished the melodies aspect of it. As soon as young people listen to *ginān*, which has wonderful and touchy melodies, they love it, and they want to learn it.[197] Above discussion shows that migration of Ismāīlīs from Indian subcontinent to East Africa, and from East Africa to Canada has affected the *ginān* in terms of language and culture, however, the sacredness and beauty of *ginān* music is still appreciated and continues to flourish among youth in the Diaspora Western country. A big number of *ginān* books are available wherever Indo-Pakistan Ismāīlī lives. In Canada, most *ginān* books are available in English and Gujarati transliteration.

F) *Recording Technologies and Internet*

Since the invention and availability of recording devices in South Asia, various musical groups started to record their songs. According to Regula Qureshi, "recorded Muslim religious music in South Asia has a history longer than living memory". Ismāīlī community in terms of media and recordings, always work faster than other communities. Hundreds of thousands of *ginān* cassettes are available within Ismāīlī community. In general, Ismāīlīs who have passion of learning and singing *ginān*, records it on audio cassettes and CDs and share them with their friends and family. I remembered my first day in Edmonton, at the home of Almas Summar, my aunt, was listening to *ginān* through a tape recorder, because she wanted to learn *ginān* and recite them in *jamā'at-khāna*. This is a very common example among, Ismāīlīs, particularly among women. The

[196] Kanji, Shiraz, interview, Edmonton, April 2004.
[197] Haji, Aman, interview, Edmonton, April 2004.

Ismāīlī Tariqah Board from all over the world publishes *ginān* cassettes from time to time particularly, and especially on an important occasion such as *didār* (Imam's physical vision). Some people personally record *ginān* and share them with their friends. This tendency of recording is much higher in the western world due to availability of resources, some Ismāīlīs particularly women have also published *ginān* CDs accompanied with musical instruments particularly from Canada. Anar Kanji, Nargis Balolia, and Sultana Kara are prominent in this respect. Dr. Hyder Alidina from Pakistan has dedicated his life to standardizing *ginān*. He has also released two cassette volumes of "Standardized *ginān*" from the Shalimar Recording Company, Pakistan. In Edmonton, Arzina Merali, has recorded a big collection of *ginān* repertoire. She does not recite *ginān*; however, she loves to listens *ginān*, and its poetry. She has a sound knowledge of technology. Therefore, she always searches for good reciters and then records them in her studio. When she found out that I am working at the University of Alberta on *ginān*, she approached me and promised me to share her recordings with the Canadian Centre for Ethnomusicology for the research purposes. Up to now, she has recorded many good Ismāīlī voices among them Jafer Ali Surmawala, Pervaiz Somji, Shabnam Merali, Farida Karamali and Mehboob Chaglani are prominent.

Another medium of transmitting *ginān* is the Internet. For the last five years the boom of the Internet industry has gone up to sky. The easiest way of getting information through the Internet is available almost everywhere. It also provides a fast medium of communication through emails and messengers. As I have mentioned, Ismāīlīs are very organized in their ritual and religious live but also much closed. It is very hard for an

outsider to get any information about Ismāīlī faith and rituals. Some official websites are available for sharing their social and human development contribution of Ismāīlīs, including the Aga Khan Development network, www.akdn.com, the Aga Khan University www.aku.net, contribution toward arts and architecture www.arch.net, for education facilities www.educationboard.ca, and for academic research purposes the Institute of Ismāīlī Studies' website www.iis.ac.uk. However there is no official single website available for informing religious and ritual information on Ismāīlīs and *ginān*. Some unofficial websites (means not registered with any Ismāīlī community) are serving this purpose. The website www.ismaili.net, is mainly use by Ismailis, in which, various article about Ismāīlī faith including *gināns* are available. Since last year many other unofficial websites are also available but not much used by Ismāīlī community. Since my last visit to *ginān* class in Edmonton, I have seen that the instructor was using photocopies of *ginān* to teach students. These photocopies were downloaded from the website, www.ismaili.net. It shows in modern society how people use the Internet as a quicker medium of transmission. Moreover, in this website a large number of *ginān* recordings are also available from which community members take advantage daily.

In this case study of *ginān* in the Diaspora Edmonton Ismāīlī community we have seen how the migration has been affecting Ismāīlīs throughout the history particularly from East Africa and Indian subcontinent. However, Ismāīlīs have never compromised with learning *ginān* and religious faith. For many East Africans, it is hard for them to find any connection with Indian subcontinent; however they never stop learning *ginān*, which is entirely the Indic tradition. The Ismāīlī generations, who have been born and raised in

Canada, are not able to understand the languages of *ginān*, a culture in which this tradition was developed. But they also feel affection for learning and performing this tradition, despite the fact; most of them have never been to India or Pakistan. There are two main reasons why the *ginān* tradition is always been very significant living tradition of Ismāīlīs in the Diaspora Western environment. First and foremost is that through *gināns*, Ismāīlīs always feel spiritually connected with their past, a past in which there ancestors were embraced in Ismāīlī Islam. It was a powerful teaching of *gināns* that binds Ismāīlīs always together, as one united community for centuries in Indian subcontinent. Second, it was delightful and sweet melodies of *gināns*, which became a powerful source of inspiration for Ismāīlīs to express and communicate with their love and devotion to the Imām.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Before summing up, I need to ask few questions of myself; what was the reason of writing this thesis? Was it necessary to initiate this work on the musical aspect of Ismāīlī *ginān*? Will this ethnomusicological research beneficial for the future scholars? Explaining *ginān* as a musical heritage is a new direction in Ismāīlī studies and therefore a special responsibility.

To address the above questions, I need to rethink why and how this first undertaking of studying *ginān* music begin. From very early age, I always cherished the beautiful melodies of *ginān*. I used to ask various questions about *ginān* music to religious teachers such as, who were the composers of *ginān*s? How did the melodies of *ginān* get composed? Is *ginān* music is based on classical music or folk tunes? Whenever, I close my eyes and sing *ginān*, through its beautiful melodies, I communicate with my lord. My first lesson of learning *ginān* same as other Ismāīlīs, started at home and then religious schools. Many times I found different tunes of the same *ginān*. After asking many questions to my religious teachers, I could not get any satisfactory answers. In the year 2000, I had an opportunity to study at the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London. My quest of learning musical context of *ginān* became even more intense when I attended the Ismāīlī *jamā'at-khāna* in London. It was the first time I met diverse Ismāīlī community members from outside Pakistan, especially East Africans Khoja Ismāīlīs. Listening to some of *ginān*s from the East African Khoja Ismāīlī at *jamā'at-khāna*, I found that some

of the tunes of *ginān* were different as compared with Pakistani tunes. After finishing my first year of studies in London, I went back to Pakistan; at this time in Karachi, the situation of learning *ginān* had totally changed drastically. The *ginān* students were divided into two groups; there was a big tension within the Karachi Ismāīlī community regarding the ragas of *ginān*. Which ragas of *ginān* is correct "traditional tunes" or "existing ragas"? Was it wrong to sing *ginān* in the same way as we had learned it in the past, or should we learn it a new? These were the issues Ismāīlī youths were facing at that time.

At that moment, I realized that there is a strong necessity to study the musical dimension of *ginān*. As a result, I initiated this work to critically analyze the issue of standardizing *ginān*, its transmission through various mediums, and its historical background with other religious music from Indian subcontinent. Due to lack of sources on the musical aspect of *ginān*, it was necessary to begin with foundational work both from musical as well as religious studies point of view. I also started to study the parallel religious devotional literatures and music from Indo-Pakistan, and try to compare them with *ginān* such as Muslim Sufi genres *Qawwālī, wāyī, Kafī, Qasidās, nuhās*, and Hindu and Sikh's *bhajans, Kirtān* and *Shābd*. It has been almost three years that I have been studying the ethnomusicological context of *ginān*. However, this still is only an introductory study for the music of *ginān*, there is much more to explore and investigate. This conclusion identifies some relevant contexts in which the study of *ginān*'s musical aspects can make a significant contribution.

Ginān is a unique literary as well as musical heritage of Ismāīlī Muslims, which throughout the centuries always being sung in its liturgical as well as in social context. This study situates *ginān* within the music of South Asia and it suggests that, *ginān* and other devotional literatures from the Indian subcontinent share their common themes in vernacular languages as a tool to spread religious mission to the masses. Ismāīlī missionary work was truly embodied with local cultures; adopted various indigenous languages and music in such a way that Hindus did not see Islam as an anti religion. May be because music connects listeners to religious sentiments that are shared across religions?

This study also situates *ginān* within the devotional and legal context of Islam more particularly in context of Ismāīlī history. It also shows how the musical sound in its sonic form plays a very significant role throughout the Islamic world, however, in many cases the word "music" does not applies with its religious function. This thesis also dealt with the issue of the legal status of music in Islam, and how we can analyze *ginān* within the larger framework of Islamic music. Moreover, there was an attempt to possibly show the connection of *ginān* with the Fatimids Ismāīlīs, and especially with their monumental work *Rasiāl Ikwān-al-Sāfa.* Throughout Ismāīlī history, religious mission was mostly carried out through various mediums including poetry and music. The *Qasidās* and *Madāh* traditions of central Asia and Syria, and *ginān* and *gīt* tradition of Indian subcontinent are some of examples to support this argument.

Ginān musical settings are traditional and diverse. They represent a great variety of melodic and rhythmic features. In the absence of a written corpus of *ginān* melodies, their study must focus on the contemporary *ginān* repertoire and the present-day practice of recitations, presentation and transmission. In particular this study explores how various experts and teachers of *ginān* have set their repertoire and methods of teaching *ginān* melodies. Among them many have also attempted to standardize their version of *ginān* tunes both on an individual level as well as through community institutions. Therefore, the search for the origin of *ginān* music is important if problematic. What can be done is to situate and critically examine *ginān* in the context of classical Indian music as well as folk music from the Indian Subcontinent. Modern scholarship reveals that some of the classical ragas are also derived from folk tunes. Therefore, *ginān* might help South Asian music scholars to explore the continuities between the categories of classical and folk music, and their history. This study suggests that Ismāīlī *ginān* are possibly blended with and influenced by both classical and folk music from the Indian subcontinent. More investigation however is required to study its historical dimension. According to Ismāīlī tradition, at least one of the last in line of *ginān* composers, Sayyīda Imam Begum was an acclaimed musician and composed all of her *gināns* accompaniment with Sarangi. However, it is difficult to find any historical evidence to indicate that all the composers of *ginān* were classically trained. If we have to judge from the existing *ginān* tunes then there is no doubt that indeed all of *ginān* composer were well versed in mystical and musical traditions of the Indian subcontinent.

Transmission is of central importance especially for the musical context of *ginān*, since it is purely oral. This study explores that how the linguistic and cultural elements have influenced *ginān* transmission both in the Indian subcontinent as well as rapidly growing diaspora in the western world, especially Canada. What are the methods the community has used to carry on the *ginānic* tradition in the West? What challenges has the community faced to continue transmitting *ginān* tradition? Due to language barriers, how has the *ginān* tradition been kept flourishing among youths in the western world? In all of above cases, ethnographic field research shows that *ginān* ragas or music has been most significant for the process of transmission. Through singing *ginān* Ismāīlī are become effortlessly connected with their past. Especially singing *ginān* in a *jamā'at-khāna* setting creates an affective sense of identity worldwide for all Khoja Ismāīlīs.

In ethnomusicology, insider research is not a common practice, though outstanding insider work does exist. The insider researcher has both advantages and disadvantages as a field worker. However, in the case of my investigation it is almost impossible for an outsider to study *ginān*, not because of an outsider's lack of efficacy but due to the absence of sources available for outsiders. *Ginān* hymns for many Ismāīlīs are sacred poems, and due to their piety, it is not a normal practice within the Ismāīlī community to share their hymns with outsiders. Also, outsiders are not allowed to attend religious ritual ceremonies in Ismāīlī prayer hall, as a result it is almost impossible for them to study the role of *ginān* music plays in its religious and communal setting. Many times during the course of my fieldwork, I found myself placed more as an outsider than an insider. Although, I am connected to the musical practice of *ginān* as a reciter, yet I found certain

local elements to be quite unique and new to me. Many times it was hard for me to explain to community members what I mean by *ginān* as "music", because it is not a normal practice to associate the word "music" with *ginān*. I believe that being an insider, it was easy for me to access knowledge and more than that I was aware of the linguistic, cultural and sacred aspect of the Ismāīlī *ginān*.

At the end, what has to be done now? What avenues need to be further explored? And what possible direction should be taken? First, I believe that it is essential to build the database library of *ginān* recordings both in audio and video forms, as well as a relevant library of academic journals, books and manuscripts. The main reason is that most of the materials on *ginān* are not accessible for outsider researchers. However, since the establishment of the Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS), London in 1977, the big collection of manuscripts and written materials such as books, journals and manuscripts are preserved at the IIS. As far as the recordings of *ginān* are concerned, there is no single institution available who has undertaken any major work on preserving *ginān* in its sonic form. There are some individuals who have initiated personally to preserve the *ginān* repertoire, however due to its difficult and painful process of preserving hundreds of *ginān* recordings, it is almost impossible to find any valuable collection of *ginān* recordings available for ethnomusicological research. Moreover, it is also necessary to encourage both academic and private scholars, collectors, and religious missionaries, who have been engaged in preserving and exploring *ginān* for decades. Above all, the treasure of *ginān* recordings needs to be preserved under the aegis of an academic institution, for

permanence and for access to scholars as well as community members, especially teachers and students of *ginān*.

For a long time *ginān* has been hidden from the gaze of outsiders, it has been very recent that work on *ginān* has been published. Still, the published work on *ginān* mostly explores it from textual approach; therefore it is almost impossible to entirely appreciate its sonic, ecstatic and synaesthetic dimensions. Therefore, I think it is a time to open up *ginān*'s literary and musical richness in line of other devotional literatures from South Asia in general, and in the spirit of spreading Islam for centuries through music in particular. Then, we will be able to appreciate openly the beauty of *ginān* music heritage as a unique Ismāīlī contribution to devotional music in the Indian subcontinent and the world.

Appenendix 1

Ginān's Questionnaire

1. What is the effect of *ginān* to its users within the Ismāīlī community?
2. What is the importance of melodies/ragas to its performers and listeners?
3. What is the ritual and sacred significance of Ismāīlī *ginān*?
4. Has the migration of Ismāīlī s resulted in any changes in their rituals ceremonies and the *ginān* performances?
5. What are the *ginān* performance style and textual selection?
6. What is the role of the audience during *ginān* recitation?
7. What is the significance of the user's knowledge and how do users position *ginān* in relation to other South Asian or Islamic traditions such as Kafi and Qawwali?
8. To what extent does the *ginān* music originate from classical Indian music or folk music?
9. What role does the *jamā'at-khāna* play in the life of the Ismāīlī Muslim in relation to *ginān*?
10. What kind of problems are youth facing in the western countries as well as in the Indian subcontinent regarding learning *ginān*?
11. What is the difference in the recitation of the *ginān* between Ismāīlīs who migrated from East Africa and Indo-Pakistan?
12. How does the *ginān* communicate with its listeners and performers?
13. Do *ginān* have fixed melodies?
14. Is *ginān* musical?
15. Does the word raga also mean "melody" for Ismāīlīs?
16. Why do *ginān* ragas differ from each other?
17. How did people adapt the tunes to popular musical style, or popular songs?
18. Did the drumming change the *ginān* rhythm through popular drumbeats?
19. What is the significance of *ginān* to its lovers, listeners and performers in the western countries?
20. What musical aspect of *ginān*, has been passing through from generation to generation within the Ismāīlī Muslim community?

21. What kind of inspiration do people get from *ginān*?

22. Why do Ismāīlīs wish to continue learning the musical tradition *ginān*?

Appendix 2

Oral Sources

1. **Alidina, Haider.** Karachi, Pakistan, at his home, December 2003.
He is originally from Pakistan. By profession he is a medical doctor. He is trained in Indian classical music. It has been almost two decades that he is exploring *ginān* in the line of Indian classical music. He has released two cassettes of standardizing *ginān* accompanied with musical instruments. In his *ginān* volumes he has also provided a brief detail about the raga of each *ginān*.

2. **Allana, Ghulam Ali.** Hyderabad, Pakistan, at his home, October 2003.
He is a very well renowned scholar on linguistics, philology, literature and history, originally from Hyderabad, Sind. He has written over twenty-five books and various academic articles in Sindhi, Urdu and English languages. Some of his books entitled *The Arabic Element in Sindhi* and *Sindhi Boli ji Lasani Jagrafai* are prominent.

3. **Ali Mohammed, Kamaluddin**. Karachi, Pakistan, at his home, December 2003.
Kamaluddin is a prominent religious scholar and a renowned Ismāīlī missionary from Pakistan. He has published over ten books and various academic articles, particularly for the Ismāīlī community. Some of his recent books are *Al-Kawaqib* and *Ismāīlī Tariqah*. He has been serving as a professional *Al-waz* for the Ismaili Tariqah Board Pakistan for the last twenty-five years.

4. **Amlani, Amirali**. Conversation over the phone, July 2004.
He is a very renowned Ismāīlī missionary and has served over three decades for the Ismaili community. His main areas of interest are *ginān*, Islam and Ismāīlī history. He is an excellent scholar on *ginānic* literature and a great teacher of Gujarati language.

5. **Asani, Ali.** London, UK, The Institute of Ismaili Studies, June 2002.

Ali S Asani is currently Professor of the Practice of Indo-Muslim Languages and Culture at Harvard University and also been serving as a visiting faculty at the Institute of Ismaili Studies. His main areas of interest are in Ismāīlī and Islamic Sufi literatures, mysticism and Islamic civilizations with a particular focus on India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. He also offers instruction in various South Asian and African languages. He is well versed in Urdu, Hindi, Sindhi, Gujarati, and Swahili. Professor Asani is the author of many scholarly journal and encyclopaedia articles, book chapters and several books on the devotional literatures of Muslim communities in South Asia, including the *Bujh Niranjan: An Ismaili Mystical Poem* and *Ecstasy and Enlightenment: The Ismaili Devotional Literatures of South Asia* are prominent. He has provided guidance and expertise from time to time over the phone as well as in informal discussions.

6. **Aziz, Abu Ali.** Vancouver, Canada, at his home, August 2004.

He was born in Amritsar, India on August 21, 1919. He has been serving the Ismāīlī community as an al-waiz (missionary) for more than sixty years. He is well versed in many languages including, Punjabi, Urdu, Gujarati, Sindhi, Persian, Arabic and English. After spending almost forty years in East Africa, he now lives in Vancouver Canada. He is the author of over ten books on the topic of Islam in general and Ismāīlī sm in particular. In April 30, 2001, he also obtained his Ph.D. from the Senior University International Wyoming, USA. His thesis entitled *Miracles and Gnosis, described the life and work of Pir Satgur Nur*. His expertise is on the Ismāīlī Ginan, therefore, he remembers by heart hundreds of *ginān* and their meanings.

7. **Bawa, Sohail Amir Ali**. Karachi, Pakistan, at his home, June 2003.

He is originally from Pakistan. He is a very good singer and often performs *ginān*, *git* and Sufi songs at various occasions.

8. **Charania, Fatimah**. Edmonton, Canada, at the University of Alberta, August 2004.

She was born and raised in Edmonton, Canada. She has a melodies voice and often recites *ginān* at Ismāīlī *jamā'at-khāna*. Her entire family is famous for performing *ginān* and *git* at various Ismāīlī occasions.

9. **Chatriwala, Hassan.** Toronto, Canada, at his home, July 2003.
He is originally from Pakistan, and currently lives in Toronto, Canada. He has learned *ginān* from various teachers including Jafersadiq Surmawala, and Zarina Kamaluddin from Pakistan. He often recites *ginān* in *jamā'at-khāna*, and used to teach *ginān* at the Ismaili Religious Schools in Karachi.

10. **Gillani, Rahim**. Karachi, Pakistan, at my home, June 2003.
He is a good poet and has an excellent command on the Islamic and South Asian art, literature and poetry. He also enjoys listening and singing *ginān*.

11. **Gillani, Yousuf.** Toronto, Canada, at his home, July 2003.
He is originally from Pakistan, currently lives in Toronto. He often recites *ginān* in the Ismaili prayer hall. He has a good historical background of Ismāīlī *ginān*.

12. **Haji Aman.** Edmonton, Canada, at my home, April 2004.
He is originally from Calgary, Canada. He has a keen interest on *ginān*, and often uses *ginān* as a source of his *waz* materials in *jamā'at-khāna*. He is also a good reciter of *ginān*.

13. **Hussainaly, Nawaz.** Edmonton, Canada, at the Centre for Ethnomusicology, University of Alberta, November 2004.
He is originally from Edmonton, born and raised in Canada. He has recently earned a Bachelors of Science in Electrical Engineering from the University of Alberta. Nawaz serves as a Religious Education Teacher for Ismaili Muslim youths in grade 10, and also served as a Camp Counselor at Camp al-Ummah for youths aged 13-17 in the summers of 2003 and 2005. He always enjoys learning and singing *ginān* inside the Ismāīlī *jamā'at-khāna*.

14. Jiwa, Pyar Ali. Edinburgh, Scotland, at his home, August 2000.
He is originally from East Africa and currently lives in Edinburgh, Scotland. He has collected a large *ginān* audio and book repertoire. He has been creating a database of Ismāīlī *ginān* for academic scholars and researchers for the last six years.

15. **Kamaluddin, Zarina.** Karachi, Pakistan, at her home, December 2003.
She is originally from Bombay, India, and for more than two decades she has been living in Pakistan. She is a prominent Ismāīlī scholar and a missionary. Her expertise is on the Ismāīlī *ginān*. She has served as an *Al-waiza* (missionary) for Ismāīlī Tariqah and Religious Education board, Pakistan for over two decades. She has been teaching *ginān* for the last eleven years in Karachi. She has recorded approximately seven hundred *ginān* with her ITREB *Ginān* group.

16. Kanji, Shiraz. Edmonton, Canada, at my home, April 2004.
He is originally from Tanzania and a graduate of University of Nairobi. It has been nearly three decades he has been living in Edmonton. He speaks several languages and has a keen interest on the Ginan literature. He is an IT professional. Currently, he is working towards a *waz*/preaching certification. He has also served Ismaili Tariqah and Religious education board of Edmonton in various key positions. He also enjoys learning and reciting *ginān*.

17. Kassam, Tazim. London, UK, at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, April 2002.
She is a historian of religions, specializing in the Islamic tradition, and serving as a director of graduate studies at Syracuse University, USA. Her research and teaching interest includes gender, ritual, devotional literature from South Asia. She has written many academic papers on various topics of Islam, gender, mysticism, and devotional poetry. Her book entitled *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance* explores the origins and creative synthesis of Hindu-Muslim ideas expressed in the Ismāīlī *ginān* tradition. Informally, she has been sharing her expertise and knowledge on *ginān* with me for over two years.

18. **Kara, Inayat Ali.** Karachi, Pakistan, at my home, July 2003.
He has been learning and teaching *ginān* in the religious school in Karachi for the last ten years. He has a melodies voice and also performs *ginān* in Ismāīlī *jamā'at-khāna*.

19. **Merali, Arzina**. Edmonton, Canada, at the Centre for Ethnomusicology, University of Alberta, June 2004.
She was born in East Africa, and currently lives in Edmonton. She has a keen interest on recording and preserving *ginān*. She has recorded over two hundred and fifty *gināns* in a CD format.

20. Merali, Shabnum. Edmonton, Canada, at the Centre for Ethnomusicology, University of Alberta, May 2003.
She is originally from Karachi, Pakistan, and has been living in Edmonton, Canada for more then two decades. She has released almost eight *ginān* CDs, and two *ghazal* CDs. She is professionally an accountant, but always engages in learning and teaching *ginān*. Often she conducts *ginān mushairos* in Edmonton.

21. Moir, Zawahir. London, UK, at her home, January 2005.
She has contributed immensely in the field of Ismāīlī *ginān*. She is originally from Pakistan and currently lives in London, UK. She has published various articles in academic journals on the topic of Ismāīlī *ginān*. She has also written a book with Dr. Christopher Shackle entitled *Ismāīlī Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the ginān*s. She is well versed in Gujarati, Sindhi, Urdu, and Hindi. On many occasions formally and informally she has shared her knowledge on *ginān* with me.

22. Mulji, Zulfiqar. Vancouver, Canada, at friends home, June 2004.
He is currently lives in Vancouver, and teaches Ismāīlī religious schools. He always enjoys singing and listening *ginān*. One of his missions is to teach *ginān* for the Ismāīlī youth in Canada.

21. **Mumtaz Tajuddin,** Karachi, Pakistan, at the Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board, Pakistan, November 2003.
He is originally from Pakistan. A private scholar, historian and has written over seven books, specifically on Ismāīlī history. He has also collected various *ginān* manuscripts mostly from Sind, Pakistan, and has been serving as a teacher for the Ismaili Tariqah Board. Some of his famous books are *Ismāīlī s through History*, *Glossary of Holy ginān s*, and *101- Ismāīlī Heroes*.

22. Nathoo, Karim. Edmonton, Canada, at the Centre for Ethnomusicology, University of Alberta, May 2003.
He is originally from East Africa, and has been living in Edmonton for the last two decades. He enjoys singing *ginān* and light Indian music. His family often recites *ginān* in the Ismāīlī *jamā'at-khāna*.

23. Surmawala, Jafer Ali. Edmonton, Canada, at my home, April 2004.
He is originally from Pakistan, and he has lived in Tanzania for eight years and is currently living in Edmonton. He is also the instructor of the Ismāīlī *ginān* in Edmonton, for the religious school. By profession he is a Chartered Accountant (FCA and AITM). He follows the same method of teaching *ginān* as his father Jafersadiq I. Surmawala. He has also recently released two CDs of Ismāīlī *ginān*.

24. **Surmawala, Jafersadiq I.** Karachi, Pakistan, at his home, December 2003.
He was born and raised in Bombay and migrated to Pakistan after independence. He served as a religious teacher in Bombay Ismāīlī religious schools. He is one of the founders of Garden Orchestra, Karachi. He has played a very significant role as a *ginān* teacher and taught *ginān* for thirty-two years in Karachi, Pakistan, under the

guidance of Ismāīlī Tariqah and Religious Education Board. His students are wide spread all over the world and continue learning and teaching *ginān*.

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